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S O M E
OF
OUR ENGLISH POETS.

BY THE
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'Poems Old and New,' 'Diana's Looking Glass, and other Poems.'

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THOMAS GRAY.

THOMAS GRAY.

MR. GOSSE, in "English Men of Letters," has given us a book which will probably be the standard authority upon Gray for the future. It is a singularly graceful as well as most interesting monograph. His edition of the "Works of Gray" is in four volumes, and is more complete than any that has yet appeared. It is certainly remarkable that all the writings of a classic so distinguished as Gray had not been given in any one edition to the world before. Mason had made a collection of the "letters" and a few of the minor prose works, and had also printed a variety of the posthumous poems. The Rev. John Mitford published the first accurate edition of the poems, and Mathias has published the works of Gray in two quarto volumes; but many of the poet's letters and verses, though published in various forms and sizes, have never been included in Gray's works. It remained for the Clark Lecturer on English Literature at Cambridge to give to the public for the first time a consecutive collection of Gray's letters and essays. Though Mr. Gosse tells us "the preparation of this issue of the entire works of

4 Thomas Gray.

Thomas Gray was no holiday task," yet it must have been a source of pleasure to himself, and assuredly his laborious carefulness as an editor is and will be a source of pleasure to others. Among the Stonehewer MSS. at Pembroke College, he found "holograph copies of the majority of Gray's poems, written by him on the backs of leaves in his great commonplace book"; and this discovery has enabled him to be independent of all previous editions, in printing the greater part of the posthumous poems, both English and Latin. Amongst other things which are new to the world, the most important contained in Mr. Gosse's first volume are, a play exercise at Eton, the poet's journal in France, and a Canto of Dante's "Inferno," which the editor characterizes as "the most vigorous passage in blank verse which has been written in English since the death of Milton." I think, however, that Mr. Gosse is mistaken in saying that the translation from "Propertius," Lib. ii., Eleg. 1, and inscribed to Mæcenæ, is now for the first time published, for the best lines in a paraphrase which is not of a high tone, or not remarkable for merit, have been long familiar to all students of Gray. I allude to the passage beginning with the lines,

"Yet would the Tyrant Love permit me raise
My feeble voice to sound the Victor's Praise,
To paint the Hero's toil, the Ranks of War,
The laurell'd Triumph, and the sculptured Carr,"

and on to the end of the poem.

It is not within my purpose to criticise Mr. Gosse's edition of Gray's works; enough to say that though it needs some emendations and a careful revision before it can be pronounced perfect, yet it must eventually supersede all former editions of the poet. My wish is to give a sketch of Gray's life, and to speak of him as a poet and a letter-writer.

The year 1885 was made memorable in literary circles by the unveiling of a bust of one of the most faultless of our poets, and one of the most illustrious children of the University, in the hall of Pembroke College, Cambridge, in the presence of men as distinguished as the late Lord Houghton, the late Mr. Russell Lowell, Sir Frederick Leighton, and others of celebrity in the world of art and literature, as well as of name and note in the University. And so, after 114 years, the poet who, as Mr. Lowell said on the occasion referred to, "has written less, and perhaps pleased more people than any other," has at last a visible memorial within the walls of the college, where he passed the longer and happier portion of his life, and where, in the arms of his friend, Dr. Brown, Master of Pembroke, he died. It will be "its own exceeding great reward" to dwell for a time on the life and writings of a poet who, if not one of the supreme poets of the world, has yet done more than any other poet, with the exception of Shakespeare and Pope, to enrich our language with felicitous lines and phrases that

have become household words, and passed into the common speech of the million.

Thomas Gray was born in Cornhill on December 26, 1716. He seems to have sprung on the side of both father and mother from the lower middle classes. When he became famous as a poet, Baron Gray, of Gray, in Forfarshire, claimed him as a relation ; but the poet showed no anxiety to prove that he had gentle blood in his veins. "I know no pretence," he said to Beattie, "that I have to the honour Lord Gray is pleased to do me ; but if his lordship chooses to own me, it certainly is not my business to deny it." The only proof that he was related to this ancient family was the possession of a bloodstone seal which had belonged to his father, engraved with Lord Gray's arms, and these have been accepted at Pembroke College as the arms of the poet. His father, Philip Gray, apparently an only son, inherited from his father, a successful merchant, a portion of £10,000, and about his thirtieth year married Miss Dorothy Antrobus, a Buckinghamshire lady about twenty years of age, who, with her elder sister Mary, kept a milliner's shop in the City. A third sister, Anna, married a country lawyer, and the two brothers, Robert and John Antrobus, were Fellows of Cambridge Colleges, and afterwards tutors at Eton. His mother was not happy in her married life ; her husband was violent, jealous, and probably mad. She had twelve children, but all except Thomas died in

infancy ; he, too, would have died as an infant had not his mother, finding him in a fit, opened a vein with her scissors, and so relieved the determination of blood to the brain. His father neglected him, and he was brought up by his mother and his aunt Mary. Indeed, so miserable was his home-life at Cornhill from the cruelties of his father, that his uncle, Robert Antrobus, removed the boy to his own house at Burnham, in Buckinghamshire. With his uncle, who was a Fellow of Peterhouse, Thomas studied botany, and became learned, according to Horace Walpole, in the virtues of herbs and simples. Unhappily for the boy, this uncle died in January, 1729. Though his father about this time had, in one of his extravagant fits, a full-length of his son painted by Richardson, the fashionable portrait-painter of the day, a picture which is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, he absolutely refused to educate him. It was at the expense of his mother, and under the auspices of his uncles, that he was sent to Eton about 1727. It was here, and in the same year, that he made the acquaintance, which ripened into a lifelong friendship, of Horace Walpole, then ten years old, and the son of a Prime Minister. They were both oppidans and not collegers, and, as Walpole confesses, they “ never made an expedition against bargemen, or won a match at cricket, but wandered through the playing-fields, tending a visionary flock, and sighing out some pastoral

name to the echo of the cascade under the bridge which crosses Chalvey Brook." An avenue of limes among the elms is still named "The Poet's Walk," and is connected by tradition with Gray. The young friends were neither of them physically strong, and cared nothing for the athletic sports in which their fellows took delight. Two other boys, similar to them in character, were drawn by sympathy to Walpole and Gray. These were West, son of a Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and grandson, on the mother's side, of the famous Bishop Gilbert Burnet, and Ashton, who died in 1775. Besides this inner circle of friends, there was an outer ring with whom Gray shared those boyish delights which he has described in one of the stanzas of his Eton Ode :

" Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race
Disporting on thy margent green
The paths of pleasure trace,
Who foremost now delight to cleave
With pliant arm thy grassy wave ?
The captive linnet which enthrall ?
What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed,
Or urge the flying ball ?"

But there is no doubt that Gray's tastes and temperament drew him more to study than to sport, and even while he was at Eton he began to write verses.*

* Mr. Gosse was fortunate enough to find among the MSS. in Pembroke College a "play exercise" in the poet's handwriting, which has never been printed, and which is valuable as showing us the early ripeness of his scholarship.

In 1734 he went to Cambridge, and was for a short time a pensioner of Pembroke Hall; but in July he entered Peterhouse as a fellow-commoner. Walpole went to King's College, Cambridge, in 1735, and West was sent by his friends to Christ Church, Oxford, much against his will. It is probable that Ashton was a student at Cambridge. During Gray's residence both at Eton and at Cambridge, he owed almost everything to his mother, who supported him from the receipts of the shop kept by herself and her sister, his father, who was miserly and most cruel to his wife, providing nothing for the maintenance of his son. Gray repaid the struggles and self-sacrifice of his mother by a passionate attachment, and remembered her with tenderness till the day of his death.

During his residence at Cambridge the poet was a victim to that melancholy which endured to the end of his life. "He was considered," to use Mr. Gosse's word, "effeminate" at College, but the only proof that is given of this is one with which the most robust modern reader must sympathize, namely, that he drank tea for breakfast, while all the rest of the University, except Horace Walpole, drank beer. He accuses himself, in a letter to West, of idleness; says "all the employment of my hours may be best explained by

It is a Latin theme, in seventy-three hexameter verses; its thoughts borrowed in the main from Horace and Pope, but suggestive of the author's maturer moral and elegiac manner, the boy being here seen as the father of the man.

negatives"; that, taking his word and experience upon it, "doing nothing is a most amusing business," and adds, "yet neither something nor nothing gives me any pleasure." This very same letter, however, proves that the idleness of his life consisted only in his imagination; for we are told that he is studying the classics, reading Statius, and translating the sixth book of the "Thebaid": this being the first example of his English verse which has been preserved. He took Dryden as a model in the art of verse-writing rather than Pope, preferring the sonorous modulations of the former to the lighter and more artificial couplets of the latter poet.

The close of Gray's undergraduate career was marked by a Latin ode; and in the same year, 1738, he translated from Propertius into English heroics a passage beginning:

"Long as of youth the joyous hours remain,
Me may Castalia's sweet recess detain,
Fast by th' umbrageous vale lull'd to repose,
Where Aganippe warbles as it flows."

After leaving Cambridge Gray resided six months in his father's house, with apparently no definite plans regarding his own future career, when Horace Walpole suddenly proposed to him that they should start together on "the grand tour." Walpole was to pay all Gray's expenses, and Gray was to be absolutely independent. So generous was this man of the world, so attached was he to Gray, that, unknown to the poet, he

made his will before starting, and left him, in case of his death abroad, his sole legatee. In March, 1739, the two friends started for Dover. It was the only time that Gray was out of his native country, but his visit to the Continent lasted for nearly three years, and produced a deep impression on his character. It roused him from his natural indolence, and while he was abroad we hear nothing of his "true and faithful companion, melancholy"; taken out of himself, he became "bright and human."

The travellers loitered through Picardy, stopping at Montreuil, Abbeville, and Amiens; and when they reached Paris they were warmly welcomed by Walpole's cousins, the Conways, and by Lord Holderness. Here the young men were introduced to what is conventionally called "the best society," and made acquaintance with all that was witty and brilliant in Paris. Gray was delighted with the elegance and cheerfulness and tolerance of Parisian society, and delivering himself into the hands of a French tutor, who covered him with silk and fringe, and widened his figure with buckram, a yard on either side, making his waistcoat and breeches so tight that he could scarcely breathe, he became quite a little fop. Thus adorned, and with a vast solitaire round his neck, wearing ruffles to his fingers'-ends, his two arms stuck into a muff, he and Walpole went to the comedy and the opera, visited Versailles, and saw all that was to be seen in Paris. In June, in

company with Henry Conway, Walpole and Gray left Paris, and travelled to Rheims, where, having introductions, they were welcomed into the best circles of the town. On leaving Rheims they visited Dijon and Lyons, and passing through Savoy that they might see the Grande Chartreuse, they arrived at last at Geneva. Returning to Lyons, they found a letter from Sir Robert Walpole, in which he desired his son to go on to Italy; so they pushed on at once to the foot of the Alps, armed against the cold with "muffs, hoods, and masks of beaver, fur boots, and bear-skins." After a very severe and painful journey of a week's duration, they descended into Italy early in November. On the sixth day of this journey an incident occurred which has been graphically described both by Walpole and Gray. Walpole had a pet little black spaniel called Tory, of which he was very fond; and as this pampered creature was trotting beside the ascending chaise, enjoying a little constitutional exercise, a young wolf sprang out of the covert and snatched the shrieking favourite away from amongst the carriages and servants before anyone had the presence of mind to draw a pistol. Walpole screamed and wept, but Tory had disappeared for ever.

Gray, in a letter to his mother, dilates on the beauty of the crags and precipices, which lent boldness to the scenery, with a warmth of language which proves him to have been a loving observer of Nature in her most sublime and grandest moods.

From a letter to West, written in Turin nine days later, we discover that Gray's thoughts still lingered among the wonders he had left behind.

"I own I have not as yet [he wrote] anywhere met with those grand and simple works of art that are to amaze one, and whose sight one is to be the better for ; but those of nature have astonished me beyond expression. In our little journey up to the Grande Chartreuse, I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining ; not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fantastic imagination to see spirits here at noonday. You have Death perpetually before your eyes, only so far removed as to compose the mind without frightening it. I am well persuaded that St. Bruno was a man of no common genius to choose such a situation for his retirement, and perhaps I should have been a disciple of his had I been born in his time."

The man who in the eighteenth century could write thus of the Alps in the beginning of winter, "not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry," was an imaginative poet in spite of the times.

The travellers spent ten days in Genoa, and left it unwillingly ; but wishing to push on, they crossed the mountains, and within three days found themselves at Piacenza, and so at Parma. They proceeded to Bologna, and, crossing the Apennines, "descended through a winding-sheet of mist into the streets of Florence." And here they were hospitably welcomed by Mr. Horace Mann, whose house was to be their home for fifteen months. Music, statuary, and painting occupied Gray's time here. They left the many

enjoyments of the City of Flowers in order to reach Rome in time to see the coronation of the successor in the Popedom to Clement XII., who had just died (March, 1740). With the magnificence of the ancient city Gray was delighted, but he found modern Rome and its inhabitants very contemptible and disgusting. He was not, however, without some amusement here, and entered freely into society; and at one ball "he watched," among others of note at Rome, "from the corner where he sat regaling himself with iced fruits, the object of his hearty disapproval, the English Pretender, displaying his rueful length of person." After visiting the remains of Herculaneum, then only just exposed, the young men returned to Rome, and then to Florence. Their life here was one of indolence and pleasure, "excellent," as Gray says, "to employ all one's animal sensations in, but utterly contrary to one's rational powers." However, he was not wholly idle. At Reggio took place the quarrel which interrupted the young men's friendship for some years. The cause of the breach has never been accurately ascertained. Walpole was the offender, and this he generously admits in a letter to Mann. Gray passed on to Venice alone, and Walpole stayed at Reggio, where he had a severe attack of quinsy, of which he might have died had he not been nursed during his illness by Spence, Oxford Professor of Poetry, and the friend of Pope, who happened to be passing through Reggio with

Lord Lincoln. Meanwhile, Gray passed leisurely through the North of Italy, and, crossing the Alps, stayed once more at the Grande Chartreuse, and wrote in the album of the Fathers his famous Alcaic Ode, "Oh tu, severi Religio loci," the best known and practically the last of his Latin poems. On September 1, 1741, he reached London, after an absence of two years and five months. Walpole, restored to health, arrived in England ten days after, but the quarrel was not then made up.

On his return to England, Gray found his father lying very ill, exhausted by successive attacks of gout, and two months later he died in a paroxysm of the disease. His last act was to squander his fortune on building a country house at Wanstead. This remained in the possession of Mrs. Gray, who with her sister, Mary Antrobus, kept house for a year in Cornhill, till at the death of their brother-in-law, Rogers, in 1742, they joined their widowed sister Anne in her house at Stoke Pogis, in Buckinghamshire. They wound up their business in Cornhill, and disposed of their shop on tolerably advantageous terms. Thinking that the family property would be enough to provide amply for him also, Gray began to study the law, and for six months or more he stayed in London, applying himself somewhat languidly to his profession.*

* The winter which Gray and West spent together in London was marked by his first original production in

After the death of his unfortunate friend West, Gray went on a visit to his uncle and aunt at Stoke Pogis, the small village with a picturesque church which has become immortal through his name. He had only been a few days at Stoke before he wrote his "Ode to Spring," a poem which is more remarkable for its form than for its expression. It is usually placed at the beginning of his poetical works, and, though lacking the perfect beauty of the "Elegy," suggests the lyrical poet of the future, and proves him eager to break away from the formal measures of what is known as "the Augustan Age" in literature. The death of West called forth some hexameters full of emotion, and also a sonnet in English, first published by Mason in his "Memoirs of Gray." This, in a MS. of the sonnet now at Cambridge, is marked "at Stoke, August, 1742." In the same month of August was written "The Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College." East and west from the church at Stoke Pogis there is a gentle acclivity from which the ground slopes southward to the Thames, and which lies opposite those "distant spires" and "antique towers" of which Gray has so melodiously sung. "The Eton

English verse, the fragment of the tragedy of "Agrippina" in blank verse, which was not a happy effort, for the drama was not the true vocation of the author of the "Elegy" and the "Bard." All that remains of the play is one complete scene, and a few odd lines which, while they display some force of versification, show a great want of true dramatic power.

Ode," to use the words of Mr. Gosse, "was inspired by the regret that the illusions of boyhood, the innocence that comes not of virtue but of inexperience, the sweetness born not of a good heart but of a good digestion, the elation which childish spirits give, and which owe nothing to anger or dissipation—that these simple qualities cannot be preserved through life." This poem, in length not a hundred lines, has the high honour of giving us three expressions which have become the very commonplaces of our language—"familiar as household words." Many use them in their daily speech, of whom it is not too much to say they are ignorant of their origin. While the "Elegy" is still read, and admired, and loved, I question if this ode is as generally known as it ought to be, though I hope in this I may be wrong. Yet who does not often use in conversation, either as a proverb or a witticism, "to point a moral or adorn a tale," the felicitous phrases, "to snatch a fearful joy," "regardless of their doom the little victims play," "where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise"?

In this same month of August, 1742, yet another ode was composed, the "Ode to Adversity," "remarkable as the first of Gray's poems in which he shows that stateliness of movement and pomp of allegorical illustration which gives an individuality in his mature style." His most important poem, "The Elegy in a Country Churchyard," was begun about the same date.

Gray was now twenty-five years of age, and never having applied himself seriously to the study of the law, and the support he gave to his mother and her two sisters leaving him but little margin, he returned to Cambridge, where living was cheap, and he could indulge his literary tastes. In the winter of 1742 he went to Peterhouse, and, taking his bachelor's degree in Civil Law, became a resident of that College. His vacations, varied only by occasional visits to London, were spent at Stoke. But though Gray took up his abode at Peterhouse, all his interests were centred in his own College of Pembroke, and outside its walls he had but few associates. His principal friend was Conyers Middleton, the librarian of Trinity, a man of mark, and broad in his theology, yet within the pale of orthodoxy, who had won his reputation by attacking the Deists from ground almost as sceptical as their own. Gray's own religion, though he had a hatred of an open profession of Deism, seems to have been but cold, lacking in warmth and in that spirituality which is the life of orthodoxy, and lifts it into a higher region than that of form. Orthodoxy without enthusiasm is but the casket without the jewel—the body without the soul.

Notwithstanding the solace of a few friendships, he found his residence at Cambridge “weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,” and its atmosphere unfavourable to the composition of poetry. The flow of his verse came to a sudden and abrupt

pause, and, forsaking the muse, he began to study the literature of ancient Greece.*

The difference with Horace Walpole came to a close in the winter of 1744, and the friends returned gradually to their old intimacy and affection. In 1747 Walpole visited, and afterwards bought, the estate on the banks of the Thames, which he made famous under the name of Strawberry Hill, and Gray scarcely ever passed a long vacation without spending some of his time there. It was now that Walpole persuaded him to publish his first poem, "The Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," which appeared anonymously in the summer of 1747. The ode fell stillborn, the public being so apathetic that it received little or no attention. Gray was at this time thirty years of age, and absolutely unknown. It was in the year 1747 that his attention was directed by a friend to a modest volume of verse in imitation of Milton; he made the acquaintance of the author, William Mason, a young man of twenty-two, the son of a Yorkshire clergyman, and a scholar of St. John's

* One of his schemes was a critical text of Strabo, which never came to anything; and the same must be said of an edition of Plato which he projected, and the notes for which were found by Mason when he came to examine his papers. He wasted months over another labour, toiling in vain on a text of the Greek Anthology, with translations of each separate epigram into Latin verse, and which he eventually abandoned. Then he determined to restore Aristotle, from the neglect into which he had fallen, to the notice of English scholars; but his intentions, after much waste of energy and learning, remained unfulfilled.

College, Cambridge. In the course of the same year, through the exertions of Gray and another friend, Dr. Heberden, a Fellow of his own College, and the distinguished Professor of Medicine, Mason was nominated a Fellow of Pembroke, a College at that time, like some of the others, given over to the Lord of Misrule. Mason became a great support and comfort to Gray. His devotion to literature, his physical vigour, his enthusiasm for the poet, supplied to Gray the stimulus he needed, and proved an amazing source of refreshment and encouragement to the fastidious, timid, and retiring man. Cambridge was at this period the scene of disgraceful orgies and disturbances, and many of the Professors and Fellows set a scandalous example to the youth of the University.*

* It was in the midst of the confusion and dissipation that reigned at Cambridge that Gray sat down to write his poem, "The Alliance of Education and Government." It is a short poem in the heroic measure, and drew from Gibbon this eulogistic notice: "Instead of compiling tables of chronology and natural history, why did not Mr. Gray apply the powers of his genius to finish the philosophical poem of which he has left us such an exquisite specimen?" In a letter written to Wharton, Gray says that his "object was to show that education and government must concur in order to procure great and useful men." While the poem was being composed, Montesquieu's "*L'Esprit des Lois*" fell into his hands, and finding, as he told Mason, that the baron had forestalled some of his best thoughts, his own treatment of the theme became distasteful to him, and the scheme languished. Some years later he thought of taking it up again, and was about to compose a prefatory ode to M. de Montesquieu, when the latter died, and the whole thing was abandoned.

In the spring of 1749 peace was established between the Masters and the Fellows of Pembroke, and Gray writes to Wharton, "Pembroke is all harmonious and delightful." In November his aunt died somewhat suddenly at Stoke. This sad event seems to have brought to his recollection "The Elegy," which he had begun at Stoke. He finished it at Stoke in June, 1750. The poem was immediately sent to Walpole, and was circulated in MS. The editor of the *Magazine of Magazines* wrote him a letter asking leave to publish it. The poet refused, and wrote to Walpole desiring him to bring it out in pamphlet form. It was published in February, 1751, by Dodsley, at sixpence, and ran through many editions in a short time. It was also largely pirated.

Thus was introduced to the world a poem which "was destined to enjoy and to retain a higher reputation in literature than any other English poem, perhaps than any other poem of the world, written between Milton and Wordsworth."

Mr. J. Russell Lowell, the late eminent Minister from the United States to our Court, in his speech on the occasion of the unveiling of the bust by Mr. Thornycroft, has called Gray "the greatest artist in words that English literature has produced," and as some critics have accused the poet of being "commonplace," entered upon the defence of the "commonplace" in poetry. And, indeed, the "Elegy" is a great poem for the

very reason that it is "commonplace;" because it touches commonplace interests, rouses commonplace emotions, awakes commonplace feelings, and expresses them in such simplicity of language and lucidity of rhythm that they reach our hearts, and enshrine themselves in our memories. There is nothing very profound or original in the thoughts, nothing in the versification of elaborate artifice or strenuous effort; but there is the exquisite beauty of perfect balance and harmony between the matter and the workmanship: there is consummate art and perfect ease; and the thoughts, the words, the music of the verse are so clear, so apt, and so melodious, that the poem will be read and loved by both old and young, so long as the English language endures. For myself, I can never read it too often; and as I read, the chord of plaintive melancholy is ever struck, and I become alive to a sadness, not deep enough for tears, but to which tears lie very close, and which needs only a little more pathos of a personal nature to call them to the eyes, and make them overflow the cheek. This poem arouses much the same feeling that one has—

"When looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more."

The only writers of note who have spoken in disparagement of Gray's poetry are Dr. Johnson,*

* Dr. Johnson had, as Boswell tells us, a low estimation of Gray as a poet, and denied him the possession of "a bold imagination, or much command of words." He, however,

who may have had personal reasons for his depreciation, and that master of music and metre, Mr. Swinburne, who from natural temperament is not fitted to do justice to Gray, although he does allow that as an elegiac poet he is unassailable and sovereign. Others, who write with authority, have meted to Gray the measure of praise which is his due. As Mr. Matthew Arnold, in his discriminating essay on Gray, in the edition of English Poets edited by Mr. Ward, reminds us, "Butler, at the end of the eighteenth century, writing to Sir William Forbes, says: 'Of all the English poets of this age, Mr. Gray is most admired, and I think with justice.' Cowper writes, 'I have been reading Gray's works, and think him the only poet since Shakespeare entitled to the character of sublime.' Adam Smith says: 'Gray joins to the sublimity of Milton the eloquence and the harmony of Pope; and nothing is wanting to render him perhaps the first poet in the English language, but to have written a little more.' And Sir James Mackintosh speaks of Gray thus: 'Of all English poets he was the most finished artist. He attained the highest degree of splendour of which poetical style seems to be capable.'"

In looking over an old number of the *Quarterly*

does praise the "Elegy" for its happy selection of images; and in his "Life of Gray" he says, referring to the same poem, "Had Gray written often thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him."

Review lately, I found mention made of one or two coincidences—or shall I call them marks of imitation?—in the “Elegy.” All are familiar with the beautiful stanza :

“Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

Now compare Bishop Hall: “There is many a rich stone laid up in the bowells of the earth, many a fair pearle in the bosome of the sea, that never was seene nor never shall bee” (“Contemplations,” L. vi., p. 872). And Dr. Young :

“Pure gurgling rills the lonely desert trace,
And waste their sweetness on the desert race.”
“Universal Passion,” Sat. v.

Again :

“Even in our ashes live their wonted fires.”
Gray.

“Even in our ashen cold is fire ywreken.”
Chaucer, “Reve’s Tale,” l. 3180.

Once more :

“There they alike in trembling hope repose,”

for which Gray refers to “the ‘paventosa speme’ of Petrarch, of which his own words are a literal version ; but he was probably not aware that Hooker, whose sublimities touch on the confines of very noble poetry, had defined ‘Hope’ to be a *trembling* expectation of things far removed” (“Eccles. Pol.,” B. i.).

I may give here a very beautiful stanza in the

"Elegy," which, though printed in some of the first editions, was afterwards omitted :

"There scattered oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen are showers of vi'lets found ;
The redbreast loves to build and warble there,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground."

It was through "The Elegy in a Country Churchyard," at that time only in manuscript, and handed about by Horace Walpole to his friends, that Gray became known to Lady Cobham, then living at the Manor House at Stoke Pogis. She conceived a great desire to know the poet, and through a little clever management effected her purpose. The acquaintance which she contrived to form with the shy poet led to a friendship with herself and her niece, Miss Speed, which lasted through the remainder of Lady Cobham's life. This lady would have been pleased to see him the husband of her niece, and Gray seems to have been really alarmed lest they should marry him to Miss Speed against his will. He escaped, however.*

Affectionate and communicative to a chosen few, Gray was fastidious in the selection of friends, and reserved in a mixed company. He had strong

* The lady, when nearly forty, married the Comte de Viry, a young French officer, and went to live abroad. The poem called "A Long Story" was written in August, 1750, and was suggested by the incident that a Lady Schaub and Miss Speed, when anxious to make the poet's acquaintance, paid him an afternoon call, and found that he had gone out for a walk. To Miss Speed he addressed his "Amatory Lines"—the only verses of this complexion which he ever composed.

affections and antipathies. One of his great aversions was Voltaire, and he regarded him as a man the influence of whose character and literary work was likely to be the cause of much public mischief. He had a mind in sympathy with "whatsoever things are true, honest, just and pure, lovely and of good report," and hence it would be said, "that if ever his papers had fallen into the hands of some mercenary and unprincipled editor, nothing could have been produced to blight his memory: no ribaldry, no scepticism, no profaneness." He was fastidious in the choice of the authors whom he read, and as a student drank from the purest fountains of literature, advising his friends to read great original writers only if they would brace the understanding, and attain to clearness of thought and solidity of knowledge. As for those who proclaimed themselves the deliberate enemies of religion, "he always asserted that such men, whether in writing or in deliberate conversation, took away the best consolation of man, without pretending to substitute any consideration of value in its place."

Gray was roused from his leisurely and scholarly ease by the news of his mother's illness, and he hurried up from Cambridge, where the tidings reached him, to find her alive and better than he expected. But she rallied only for a time, and died, after a painful struggle, in March, 1753, at the age of sixty-seven. She was buried in the family vault, and her son inscribed on her tombstone the simple and touching epitaph :

"In the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, here sleep the remains of Dorothy Gray, widow, the careful, tender mother of many children, one of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her."

Walpole has remarked that Gray was "in flower" during the years 1750-1755. "The Ode on the Pleasure arising from Vicissitude" was found after the poet's death in a pocket-book of the year, but it was unrevised and unfinished. Gray acknowledged that he owed the idea of this poem to Gresset's "*Epître à ma Sœur*." Mason with some audacity printed the poem restored and finished by himself. Seven complete stanzas are the genuine work of Gray.

It is not certain at what time Gray resolved on composing what we know as "The Pindaric Odes," odes in the Greek manner, and in the style of Pindar; but towards the close of 1754 he completed one such elaborate lyric, "The Progress of Poesy." Matthew Arnold remarks that "the evolution of 'The Progress of Poesy' is no less noble and sound than its style." By evolution he means that the ideas naturally flow out of one another till the climax is attained; thought follows thought consecutively, and, as Mr. Gosse remarks, "Each line, each group of lines, has its proper place in a structure that could not be shorter or longer without a radical re-arrangement of ideas." Gray said himself that the style he aimed at was "extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical." Compared with the poetry of the age in which he wrote, he may be said to have reached in his style

the excellence after which he aspired. In 1754, the year in which "The Progress of Poesy" was finished, "The Bard" was begun. It was not published, however, till 1757, when it appeared with "The Progress of Poesy," and bore the title of Ode II. It attained on the instant a popularity which has been awarded to it from that day to this. It has three divisions, with strophe, anti-strophe, and epode, and is distinguished by a patriotic fervour and a sustained dignity of style. It opens with the startling voice of the last of the ancient race of the Celtic Bards, who from a rock above the defile through which the forces of Edward I. are about to march, "reproaches the King with all the misery and desolation which he had brought into his country, foretells the misfortunes of the Norman race, and with prophetic spirit declares that all his cruelty shall never extinguish the noble ardour of poetic genius in this island, and that men shall never be wanting to celebrate true virtue and valour in immortal strains, to expose vice and infamous pleasure, and boldly censure tyranny and oppression." The opening lines are admirably effective, and at once impress the imagination :

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless King !
Confusion on thy banners wait,
Tho' fann'd by Conquest's crimson wing,
They mock the air with idle state.
Helm, nor Hauberk's twisted mail,
Nor even thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears !"

The vision of Elizabeth, surrounded by a courtly throng of her barons and poets, is one of the most striking passages in the poem :

“Girt with many a Baron bold,
Sublime their starry fronts they rear ;
And gorgeous Dames and Statesmen old
In bearded majesty appear.
In the midst a Form divine !
Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-line ;
Her lyon-port, her awe-commanding face,
Attemper'd sweet to virgin grace.
What strings symphonious tremble in the air !
What strains of vocal transport round her play !
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear ;
They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
Bright Rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,
Waves in the eye of Heav'n her many-colour'd wings.”

Few, if any, at the present day will agree with Dr. Johnson's estimate of the odes : “They are forced plants, raised in a hot-bed, and they are poor plants ; they are but cucumbers after all.”* It is an extraordinary piece of criticism.

In 1757 Colley Cibber died, having held the office of Poet-Laureate for twenty-seven years. The post was offered to Gray by the Duke of Devonshire, who was then Lord Chamberlain ; but he directed Mason, through whom the offer was made, to decline it very civilly :

“Though I well know the bland, emollient, saponaceous qualities both of sack and silver, yet if any great man would say, to me, ‘I make you Rat-catcher to his Majesty, with a salary of £300 a year, and two butts of the best Malaga ; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we shall not stand upon these things,’ I cannot say I should jump at

* Boswell's “Life of Johnson.”

it. Nay, if they would drop the very name of the office, and call me *Sinecure* to the King's Majesty, I should still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me. But I do not pretend to blame anyone else that has not the same sensations. For my part, I would rather be serjeant-trumpeter, or pin-maker to the palace. Nevertheless, I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit. Rowe was, I think, the last man of character that had it. As to Settle, whom you mention, he belonged to my Lord Mayor, not to the King. Eusdon was a person of great hopes in his youth, though at last he turned out a drunken parson. Dryden was as disgraceful to the office, from his character, as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses. The office itself has always humbled the professor hitherto (even in an age when kings were somebody); if he were a poor writer, by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one, by setting him at war with the little fry of his own profession; for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet laureate."

It is interesting to read Gray's opinion of the office of Poet Laureate now that the office is in abeyance. His estimate was far from high, but there is no doubt that however it may have been degraded by some who held it, it has been ennobled by Southey and Wordsworth and Tennyson, each of whom received "the laurel greener from the brows" of his predecessor. And this is the man whom Johnson called "a dull fellow," dull in company, dull in his "closet," dull everywhere! Is it possible that Johnson was jealous of Gray's high reputation? Even the greatest men are not free from faults and foibles.

In 1768 Gray published some romantic lyrics, paraphrased in short measure, from Icelandic and Gaelic sources. In these romantic poems he

is the herald of Sir Walter Scott and of the later poets, who have treated with great power and effect themes suggested by the old Norse literature. The three paraphrases are, "The Fatal Sisters," "The Descent of Odin," and "The Triumphs of Owen." We quote a few lines from the first of these :

"Weave the crimson web of war,
Let us go, and let us fly.
Where our friends the conflict share,
Where they triumph, where they die.

"As the paths of fate we tread,
Wading through th' ensanguin'd field,
Gondola, and Geira, spread
O'er the youthful king your shield.

"We the reins to slaughter give,
Ours to kill, and ours to spare ;
Spite of danger he shall live.
(Weave the crimson web of war.)"

When the Duke of Grafton succeeded the Duke of Newcastle as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in 1768, Gray composed an ode to be performed at the ceremony of the installation. This was "The Installation Ode"; and being set to music by the Professor of Music, Dr. J. Randall, of King's, was performed before a brilliant assembly on July 1, 1769. The poem, though unequal, and not sustained with the same dignity throughout, contains some fine passages, and Hallam praises highly the stanza in which the procession of Cambridge worthies is sung. It begins :

"But hark ! the portals sound, and pacing forth
With solemn steps and slow,
High potentates, and dames of royal birth,
And mitred fathers in long order go ;

Great Edward, with the lilies on his brow
 From haughty Gallia torn ;
 And sad Chantillon, on her bridal morn
 That wept her bleeding Love ; and princely Clare,
 And Anjou's heroine, and the paler rose,
 The rival of her crown and of her woes,
 And either Henry there,
 The murder'd saint and the majestic lord
 That broke the bonds of Rome."

But perhaps the most beautiful passage is the third strophe, the stanza supposed to be sung by Milton, and written in the metre which Milton chose for the opening of his "Hymn on the Nativity," "'Twas in the winter wild."

"Ye brown, o'er-arching groves,
 That Contemplation loves,
 Where willowy Camus lingers with delight !
 Oft at the blush of dawn
 I trod your level lawn ;
 Oft woo'd the gleam of Cynthia silver-bright
 In cloisters dim, far from the haunts of Folly,
 With freedom by my side, and soft-eyed Melancholy."

This ode was the last of Gray's works ; his poetic life was over. As his health was now bad, and his spirits depressed, he sought refreshment and amusement in travel, and he visited Scotland, Wales, and the English Lakes. He was the first to open up to Englishmen the beauties of Westmoreland and the whole Lake country, and to direct attention to the romantic landscapes of that lovely land. Wordsworth afterwards immortalized the exquisite scenes which the elder poet described with such impressiveness and unaffected sincerity in the "Journal in the Lakes."

I now come to the last months of Gray's life.

He had formed a friendship with a young Swiss gentleman, named Charles Victor de Bonstetten, who had come to England to study our language and literature. His gaiety, his love for English poetry, conquered the shy and solitary poet at sight, and the difference in age between them disappeared at once. They read together, at Cambridge, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, and the other great English classics, "until their study would slip into sympathetic conversation, in which the last word was never spoken." When Bonstetten left for Switzerland, he had compelled Gray to promise that he would visit him the next summer. However, Gray became too unwell to carry out his purpose, and, overwhelmed by dejection, he remained at Cambridge. While he was at dinner in the College Hall of Pembroke, on July 24, he felt a sudden nausea, which obliged him to go hurriedly to his room. He never left his bed, and was seized on the Sunday with a strong convulsive fit, and the fits recurred until he died. He was perfectly sensible of his condition, retained his senses almost to the last, but expressed no concern at the thought of leaving the world. Towards the end he did not suffer, but lay in a sort of stupor, out of which he woke to call for his niece, Miss Mary Antrobus. She took his hand, and he said to her in a clear voice: "Molly, I shall die!" These were his last words. He ceased to breathe about eleven o'clock, an hour before midnight, on July 30, 1771, aged fifty-four

years, seven months, and four days. So passed away a man of whom Mr. Temple, Rector of St. Gluvias, Cornwall, said: "Perhaps he was the most learned man in Europe. He was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of science, and that not superficially, but thoroughly. He knew every branch of history, both natural and civil, had read all the original historians of England, France, and Italy, and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, made a principal part of his study; voyages and travels of all sorts were his favourite amusements; and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening." Yet Johnson could call him "a dull fellow"! He was buried at Stoke, under the "ivy-mantled tower" of which he had sung in the most famous of his poems, and in the same vault that contained all that was mortal of his mother.

James Brown, Master of Pembroke Hall, at Cambridge, Gray's friend and executor, wrote a letter a fortnight after Gray's death to another of his friends, Dr. Wharton, of Old Park, Durham, in which occurs the following passage: "Everything is now dark and melancholy in Mr. Gray's room—not a trace of him remains there; it looks as if it had been for some time uninhabited, and the room bespoke for another inhabitant. The thoughts I have of him will last, and will be useful to me the few years I can expect to live. He

never spoke out, but I believe, from some little expressions I now remember to have dropped from him, that for some time past he thought himself nearer his end than those about him apprehended." Matthew Arnold considers that those four words, "he never spoke out," explain the scantiness of his poetical work. "He never spoke out" in poetry because, in addition to his shyness and ill-health, he, as a born poet, fell upon an age of prose. Mr. Arnold thinks that "if he had been born in the same year with Milton, Gray would have been another man; born in the same year with Burns, he would have been another man." "A man born in 1608 could profit by the larger and more poetic scope of the English spirits in the Elizabethan age; a man born in 1759 could profit by the European renewing of men's minds of which the great historical manifestation is the French Revolution." But as regards literary productions in the eighteenth century, "its taste was not the poetic interpretation of the world; it was to create a plain, clear, straightforward, efficient prose. Poetry obeyed the bent of mind requisite for due fulfilment of this task of the century. It was intellectual, argumentative, ingenious; not seeing things in their truth and beauty, not interpretative." "A sort of spiritual east-wind was at that time blowing;" and to a man like Gray, who had the mind and soul of a genuine poet, "full, spiritual flowering was impossible." There

is no doubt a great deal of truth in this criticism, but may not Gray's scantiness of production be also partly explained by his fastidiousness, by his elaborate exactness, by his desire to bring each line to the highest degree of polish and perfection, as well as by an indolence which grew fatigued before the projected work was completed? Had Milton been born in the eighteenth century, would his productiveness have been restrained by the want of a congenial atmosphere? Had Burns been born in this age, would its prosaic character have fettered the flow of his genius and condemned it to sterility?

But whatever was the cause, Gray never did "speak out" in his poetry, and therefore no one can rightly estimate the man, or his place in literature, who has not read his letters and his journals. His "letters are delightful:" now full of humour, now thoughtful, tender, serious. He almost equals Cowper, if he may not dispute with him the palm of being "the best letter-writer in the language." He is especially happy in descriptive power, and when he writes of places, discusses poetry, or refers lightly to some piece of gossip, he charms us by his ease and playfulness of style. Simplicity, life, spontaneity, play of fancy, and flashes of wit, are all characteristics of the letter-writing of Gray. I would just send all who desire to know his endowments as a letter-writer and his picturesqueness in description to "The Works of

Gray," already mentioned as having been edited by Mr. Gosse.

One passage from his letters, sweet, serious, and unaffected, I must give, concluding with two extracts of great beauty from his "Journal in the Lakes." The passage that follows is from a letter to his mother on the death of his aunt, Mary Antrobus, written from Cambridge (November, 1749):

"The unhappy news I have just received from you equally surprises and afflicts me. I have lost a person I loved very much, and have been used to from my infancy; but am much more concerned for your loss, the circumstances of which I forbear to dwell upon, as you must be too sensible of them yourself, and will, I fear, more and more need a consolation that no one can give except He Who had preserved her to you so many years, and at last, when it was His pleasure, has taken her from us to Himself; and perhaps, if we reflect upon what she felt in this life, we may look upon this as an instance of His goodness both to her and to those that loved her. She might have languished many years before our eyes in a continual increase of pain, and totally helpless; she might have long wished to end her misery without being able to attain it, or perhaps even lost all sense, and yet continued to breathe—a sad spectacle for such as must have felt more for her than she could have done for herself. However you may deplore your own loss, yet think that she is at last easy and happy, and has now more occasion to pity us than we her. I hope and beg you will support yourself with that resignation we owe to Him Who gave us our being for good, and Who deprives us of it for the same reason."

I close with two extracts from his "Journal of a Tour in the Lakes." He writes:

"Walked over a spongy meadow or two, and began to mount this hill through a broad and straight green alley among the trees, and with some toil gained the summit. From hence saw the lake opening directly at my feet, majestic in its calmness, clear and smooth as a blue mirror,

with winding shores and low points of land covered with green enclosures, white farmhouses looking out among the trees, and cattle feeding. The water is almost everywhere bordered with cultivated lands, gently sloping upwards till they reach the feet of the mountains, which rise very rude and awful with their broken tops on either hand. Directly in front, at better than three miles' distance, Place Fell, one of the bravest among them, pushes its bold, broad breast into the midst of the lake, and forces it to alter its course, forming first a large bay to the left, and then bending to the right."

And now for the second passage :

"In the evening walked alone down to the lake by the side of Crow Park after sunset, and saw the solemn colouring of light draw on, the last gleam of sunshine fading away on the hill-tops, the deep serene of the waters, and the long shadows of the mountains thrown across them, till they nearly touched the hithermost shore. At distance heard the murmur of many waterfalls, not audible in the daytime. Wished for the moon, but she was *dark to me and silent, hid in her vacant interlunar cave.*"

Surely this is poetry, if poetry there be in the world, though the thought is expressed in prose.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.



OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

“**W**HETHER, indeed, we take him as a poet, as a comic writer, or as an historian, he stands in the first class.”

Such was Johnson's verdict on the power and versatility of Oliver Goldsmith, whose genius he had been amongst the first to recognise, and to whom he had extended a wise and benevolent friendship. A sketch of the life and writings of a man whose works have taken their place as classics in our language, and whose poems are read with ever fresh delight, and are remarkable for their naturalness and grace, will, it is hoped, be acceptable to all by whom poetry is loved.

Goldsmith has been fortunate in his biographers. His life has been written by Prior, by Washington Irving, and John Forster. Macaulay has added a sketch of the poet to his other brilliant essays. And very lately a biography by Mr. William Black has appeared in the series entitled “English Men of Letters.” But while we are indebted to the diligence of Prior, to the pleasing pen of Washington Irving, to the eminently copious Life by Forster, and to the interesting monograph by Mr. Black, it is a subject of general regret that Dr.

Samuel Johnson did not bequeath to posterity a biography of his friend. Lord Macaulay says, and all must agree with him, that "a Life of Goldsmith would have been an inestimable addition to the 'Lives of the Poets.' No man appreciated Goldsmith's writings more fully than Johnson; no man was better acquainted with Goldsmith's character and habits; and no man was more competent to delineate with truth and spirit the peculiarities of a mind in which great powers were found in company with great weaknesses." Still, we must be thankful for what we possess; and there is material enough to trace his history from its earliest period onwards through the battle of life, till he was brought by his follies and imprudence to an untimely grave.

Oliver Goldsmith was born at Pallas, in the county of Longford, November 11, 1728. He was of a Protestant and Saxon family, which had been long settled in Ireland. In after-life he was wont to say that he was connected with no less celebrated a personage than Oliver Cromwell, from whom his Christian name was derived. By his father's side, he also claimed kinship with Wolfe, the conqueror of Quebec, whose mother was a Goldsmith. His father, Charles Goldsmith, studied in the reign of Queen Anne at the Diocesan School at Elphin, became attached to the daughter of the schoolmaster, married her, took orders, and settled at Pallas. There he, with difficulty, supported his wife and children on what

he could earn—partly as a curate, and partly as a farmer. While Oliver was still a child, his father was presented to the rectory of Kilkenny West, in the county of Westmeath, worth about £200 a year. The family accordingly quitted their cottage for a spacious house near the village of Lissoy. It was here the poet fixed his “Auburn”; here the eye of the child gazed upon the scenes which the mind of the man has clothed with imperishable beauty.

We have from Goldsmith what may be accepted as a sketch of his father’s character, and of those elements of it which produced, no doubt, a remarkable effect on his susceptible son. In “The Citizen of the World” there is given, in Letter XXVII., “The History of the Man in Black,” whose benevolence, writes Oliver, “seemed to be rather the effect of appetite than of reason.” The Rev. Charles Goldsmith is believed to be truly described in these words :

“My father, the younger son of a good family, was possessed of a small living in the Church. His education was almost his fortune, and his generosity greater than his education. Poor as he was, he had his flatterers—still poorer than himself; for every dinner he gave them, they returned an equivalent in praise, and this was all he wanted. . . . He told the story of the ivy-tree, and that was laughed at; he repeated the jest of the two scholars and one pair of breeches, and the company laughed at that; but the story of Taffy in the sedan-chair was sure to set the table in a roar. Thus his pleasure increased in proportion to the pleasure he gave; he loved all the world, and he fancied all the world loved him. . . . We were told that universal benevolence was what first cemented society. We were taught to consider all the wants of mankind as our own, to regard the human face divine with affection and esteem. He wound us up to be

mere machines of pity, and rendered us incapable of withstanding the slightest impulse, made either by real or fictitious distress ; in a word, we were frequently instructed in the art of giving away thousands before we were taught the more necessary qualifications of getting a farthing."

Oliver was taught his letters by a maid-servant, and was sent in his seventh year to a village school, kept by an old quartermaster on half-pay, who professed to teach nothing but "the three R's"—reading, writing, and arithmetic, but who had an inexhaustible fund of stories about ghosts, banshees, and fairies—about the great Rapparee Chief, Baldeary O'Donnell, and galloping Hogan. This man was a true Milesian, and not only spoke the Irish language, but could pour forth unpremeditated Irish verses. Oliver early became, and through life continued to be, a passionate admirer of Irish music, and especially of the compositions of Carolan, a blind harper, some of the last notes of whose harp he heard.

From Lissoy school and Paddy Byrne, Goldsmith was removed in his ninth year. He went to several grammar schools, where, though he showed a distaste for the exact sciences, he acquired a fair knowledge of the ancient languages. His life at this time seems to have been far from happy. His school experiences were bitter. The shy, ill-favoured, backward boy was early and sadly taught what tyrannies in the large, as in that little world, the strong have to inflict, and what suffering the meek must be prepared to endure. "He was considered by his contempo-

aries and schoolfellows to be a stupid, heavy blockhead, little better than a fool, whom everyone made fun of." His appearance made him a good mark for the ridicule of his companions. His features were harsh even to ugliness. The small-pox, which scourged all Europe at that time, had set its mark on him with more than usual severity. His stature was small, and his limbs ill put together. Among boys little tenderness is shown to personal defects; and the ridicule excited by poor Oliver's appearance was heightened by a peculiar simplicity and a disposition to blunder, which he retained to the last. He became the common butt of boys and masters, was pointed out as a fright in the playground, and flogged as a dunce in the school-room. Even amongst his friends he was made the subject of derision. "Why, Noll," exclaimed a visitor at Uncle John's, "you are become a fright! When do you mean to get handsome again?" Oliver moved in silence to the window. The speaker, a thoughtless and notorious scapegrace of the Goldsmith family, repeated the question with a worse sneer. "I mean to get better, sir, when you do," was the boy's retort; and it has delighted his biographers for its quickness of repartee. There was a company one day at a little dance, and the fiddler, being a fiddler who reckoned himself a wit, used Oliver as a subject for his jests. During a pause between two country dances, the party had been greatly

surprised by little Noll quickly jumping up and dancing a *pas seul* impromptu about the room, whereupon, seizing the opportunity of the lad's ungainly look and grotesque figure, the jocose fiddler promptly exclaimed, "Æsop!" A burst of laughter rewarded him, which, however, was rapidly turned the other way by Noll stopping his hornpipe, looking round at his assailant, and giving forth in audible voice, and without hesitation, this couplet, which was thought worth preserving as the first formal effort of his genius :

"Heralds, proclaim aloud this saying :
See Æsop dancing, and his monkey playing."

Everybody knows the story of that famous "Mistake of a Night," when the young schoolboy, provided with a guinea and a nag, rode up to "the best house" in Ardagh, called for the landlord's company over a bottle of wine at supper, and for a hot cake for breakfast the next morning, and found, when he asked for the bill, that the "best house" was Squire Featherstone's, and not the inn for which he mistook it.

In his seventeenth year, Oliver went up to Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar. The sizars paid nothing for food and tuition, and very little for lodging ; but they had to perform some menial offices from which they have long been happily relieved. It was but a poor return for having proved themselves good classical scholars, that they should be compelled to sweep the court, to carry up the dinner to the Fellows' table, to change

the plates, and pour out the ale of the rulers of the society.

Goldsmith was quartered in a garret, on the window of which his name, scratched by himself, is still read with interest. The pane of glass has now become a historical relic, and is preserved with care in the college library. His college life was irregular and unhappy. He neglected the studies of the place, stood low at the examinations, was turned down to the bottom of the class for playing the buffoon in the lecture-room, was severely reprimanded for pumping on a constable in the quadrangle. On one occasion he was caned by a tutor for giving a ball in the attic-story of the college to some gay youths and maidens from the city. When his pocket was empty he composed ballads, for which he received a few shillings, and enjoyed the luxury of fame by listening to the singers in the streets and the applause of the crowd. On his way home, he would bestow the price of his poetic effusions on the first beggar who whined for an alms.

The following anecdote is related by Washington Irving : A friend having gone to call on him one morning, meaning to furnish him with a breakfast, knocked at the door, and was bidden to enter. To his surprise he heard Goldsmith's voice from within the room, proclaiming himself a prisoner, and saying that they must force the door to help him out. His friend did this, and found him so fastened in the ticking of the bed,

into which he had taken refuge from the cold, that he could not escape unassisted. Late on the preceding night, unable otherwise to relieve a woman and her five children who implored his charity, and seemed perishing for want of warmth, he had brought out his blankets to the college gate and given them to her, and to keep himself from the cold he had cut open his bed and buried himself among the feathers. Attractive as is at first sight such an instance of prompt sympathy with distress, we must not unthinkingly be led away by it. "Sensibility," it has been observed, "is not benevolence." It is possible to relieve want from a simply selfish feeling—the desire to escape from pain. There is a benevolence which is unthinking, having nothing to do with either conscience or reflection, and flowing from an inconsiderate impulse. The sight of sorrow may distress the feelings, and the first rising wish may be to get rid of that which so unpleasantly affects us. But have we, in all honesty, a right to give? Have we earned the title to the luxury of supplying the wants of others? Should we not be just before we are generous? Judged by this standard, it is to be feared that poor Oliver had little right to give away even the blankets from his bed to cover the woman and her five little children, though her tale of distress was too much for his kind heart; for, while he was so liberal to beggars, he had nothing to satisfy the importunity of his tailor or to pay

his butcher's bill. It may sound harsh to point such a moral as this; but is it not well to interpose when anecdotes of this description are told of one in whose character there was much to love, more to compassionate, but less, it is to be feared, to respect?

While Goldsmith was leading at Dublin a life divided between squalid distress and squalid dissipation, his father died, leaving him a mere pittance. The youth obtained his bachelor's degree, and left the University. For two years he dwelt among his friends, and shared the humble dwelling to which his widowed mother had retired. She had removed in her straitened circumstances to a cottage at Ballymahon. He was now in his twenty-first year. It was necessary that he should do something; but he seems to have spent this interval in idleness, playing at cards, singing Irish airs, studying the flute, fishing, otter-hunting in the summer among the rocks and wooded islands of the Inny, and telling ghost-stories by the fire in the winter. He tried five or six professions in turn without success. At the earnest solicitations of his Uncle Contarine, he presented himself to the Bishop of Elphin for ordination when he had reached the age of twenty-three; but he was rejected, some say because he appeared before his lordship in scarlet breeches! His love of personal finery was extreme; he delighted to show himself in the most gay and gaudy colours.

He next became tutor in a gentleman's family;

but after a few months he quarrelled with his host, while playing at cards, and receiving his stipend of £30, he mounted a horse and rode off to Cork with the intention of emigrating to America. He secured his passage, but the wind proving unfavourable, he went on a party of pleasure, whereupon the captain sailed without him; and then, having sold his horse and spent his money, he returned to his widowed mother, hungry and penniless.

He now resolved to study the law; and his generous uncle advanced fifty pounds. With this sum Goldsmith went to Dublin, on his way to London; and there being tempted to enter a gaming-house, lost every shilling. He now thought of medicine. The good uncle again came forward. A small purse was made up, and in his twenty-fourth year he was sent to Edinburgh. This was in the autumn of 1752. At Edinburgh he spent two winters in nominal attendance on lectures, and picked up some superficial knowledge about chemistry and natural history. Thence he went to Leyden (still a pensioner on the bounty of kind Uncle Contarine), with the professed object of studying physic. The generosity of his uncle called forth a characteristic letter of thanks:

“As I shall not have another opportunity of receiving money from your bounty till my return to Ireland; so I have drawn for the last sum which I hope I shall ever trouble you for—it is twenty pounds: and now, dear Sir, let me here acknowledge the humility of the station in which

you found me ; let me tell you that I was despised by men, and hateful to myself ; poverty, hopeless poverty was my lot, and melancholy was beginning to make me her own—when you—but I stop to inquire how your health goes on.”

Goldsmith's career at Leyden was much the same as it had been elsewhere. He studied men and letters more than physic, and contrived to live by teaching English, by borrowing money, and by other expedients. At the end of a year he left the celebrated University without a degree, with the merest smattering of medical knowledge, and with no property but his clothes and his flute. His flute, however, proved a useful friend. He rambled on foot through Flanders, France, and Switzerland, playing tunes which everywhere set the peasantry dancing, and which often procured for him a supper and a bed. He wandered as far as Italy, and he tells us he obtained from the University of Padua a courtesy “doctor's” degree (M.B.).

So travelled on the truant from place to place, gathering that experience of men and things and foreign lands which his “Traveller” has made immortal. Few have turned their experience of varied lands to so good an account. As he passed from scene to scene, his education was going on ; his sympathies were widening, his knowledge was enlarged, and his genius was acquiring a fuller power and more subtle force. To his vagabond life we are indebted for the poem which at once raised him to the rank of a legitimate English classic, and to which Macaulay awards this high

praise: "No philosophical poem, ancient or modern, has a plan so noble, and at the same time so simple, as 'The Traveller.'"

In 1756, when twenty-seven years of age, he landed at Dover, without a shilling and without a friend. In England his flute was not in request, and he was compelled to have recourse to a series of desperate expedients. He turned strolling-player; he went among the London apothecaries, and asked them to let him pound their drugs and spread their plasters; he joined a swarm of beggars which made its nest in Axe Yard; he was for a time usher of a school; became a bookseller's hack; and obtained a medical appointment in the East India Company, but this being speedily revoked, he presented himself at Surgeons' Hall for examination as a mate to a Naval Hospital; and being pronounced unequal even to so humble a post, he found himself a wanderer, without an acquaintance, without the knowledge or comfort of even one kind face, in the lonely, terrible London streets.

So ends what we may term the first period of Goldsmith's life.

Poor Oliver! He lacked strength of purpose, steadiness of principle, and self-control. "That strong, steady disposition which alone makes men great," he avowed himself deficient in. What more he might have achieved early in life, what more he might have accomplished in the future than he did, it is impossible to say. One thing,

however, we must all bear in mind : the dowry of genius must not blind us to the weaknesses to which it is too often allied. A worthless, a purposeless life, ought never to be condoned simply because it is associated with talent. The rarer the endowments, the deeper the obligation to consecrate them to noble ends and lofty aims, and the greater the responsibility of abusing or misapplying such Divine gifts. The man of genius is under a greater responsibility than other men to reverence and obey all the laws of God and man. While we frankly acknowledge our debt of gratitude to those who, from the gift and use of "the faculty divine," have afforded us many an hour of innocent pleasure and amusement ; have enriched our minds with beautiful thoughts and noble ideas ; have charmed us by their humour, or touched us by their pathos ; let us, alive to the common rules of morality by which all must be tested, never attempt to gloss over the errors which they committed, or condone the faults of which they were guilty. Genius must be judged by the same rules as dulness : what is folly and imprudence in the one, is equally folly and imprudence in the other. In either case, he that sows to the wind shall reap the whirlwind. There is great truth in the solemn words with which Dr. Johnson concludes his biography of Savage :

"Those who, in confidence of superior capacities or attainments, disregard the common maxims of life, must be re-

minded that nothing will supply the want of prudence ; that negligence and irregularity long continued, will make knowledge useless, wit ridiculous, and genius contemptible."

We now enter upon Goldsmith's London life, that life which, after many hardships and bitter struggles and depressing difficulties, ended in brilliant fame. Something of his sufferings in the great human wilderness of London, when a stranger and penniless he wandered through its streets, and lodged in its garrets, may be gathered from the following extract from a letter to his brother-in-law :

"You may easily imagine what difficulties I had to encounter, left, as I was, without friends, recommendation, money or impudence, and that in a country where being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me unemployed. Many in such circumstances would have had recourse to the Friar's cord, or the suicide's halter ; but, with all my follies, I had the principle to resist the one and resolution to combat the other."

Under the pressure of absolute want, he betook himself to the lowest drudgery of literature. He hired a garret in a miserable court, to which he had to climb from the brink of Fleet Ditch by a dizzy ladder of flagstones called Break-neck Steps. Here, at thirty, he toiled incessantly ; and in the six succeeding years he sent to the press articles for reviews, magazines and newspapers, produced children's books, wrote a "History of England," and gave to the world some amusing "Sketches of London Society," in a series of letters purporting to be addressed by a Chinese Traveller to his friends. Stern was the discipline of sorrow to

which he was subjected while slowly mounting the ladder of fame.

One result of his sorrows may be seen in that sympathy with misfortune which was a peculiar characteristic of the grief-taught man. He published in the *Bee*, with the title of "The City Night Piece," an account of a lonely journey through the London streets, where he would wander at night, to console and reassure the misery he could not otherwise give help to. And there he saw many a sad sight, looked on many a sorrow which might well bring tears from eyes "albeit unused to weep," and came into contact with the wretched outcasts of a great and wicked city. "Strangers, wanderers, and orphans," cast upon the cold charity of the world; "poor shivering girls," possessed with the fatal gift of beauty, and who lent too ready an ear to the voice which flattered only to betray, thrown by seducers on the cruel streets; the poor homeless creatures, to whom no door was open :

" Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled
Anywhere—anywhere out of the world."

Seeing such piteous sights as these, the poor and the suffering were regarded as his clients, and their cause became his own for ever.

His acquaintance with man, and with the sorrows, the passions, the foibles of humanity, his large experience of the world and its ways, give

the charm of reality to his delightful volumes. Macaulay thus speaks of Goldsmith as a writer of prose :

“ There have been many greater writers ; but perhaps no writer was ever more uniformly agreeable. His style was always pure and easy, and on proper occasions pointed and energetic. His narratives were always amusing, his descriptions always picturesque, his humour rich and joyous, yet not without an occasional touch of amiable sadness. About everything that he wrote, serious or sportive, there was a certain natural grace and decorum hardly to be expected from a man a great part of whose life had been passed among thieves and beggars, street-walkers, and merry-andrews, in those squalid dens which are the reproach of great capitals.”

Goldsmith's name gradually became known and the circle of his acquaintance widened. In his new apartments* (May, 1761), he gave a supper ; and amongst his guests was Dr. Percy, afterwards Bishop of Dromore, who introduced him to Samuel Johnson, then considered the first of living writers. Shortly afterwards he formed a friendship with Reynolds, the first of English painters, and with other men eminent in the walks of literature and art. In 1763 he was one of the nine original members of that celebrated brotherhood which still glories in the name of “ The Club,” and became the welcome companion of the brightest wits and deepest scholars of the day. The place of meeting was the Turk's Head Tavern, in Gerrard Street, Soho, where, the chair being taken every Monday night by a

* He removed from his garret in Green Arbour Court to more decent lodgings in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, where he occupied two rooms for nearly two years.

member in rotation, all were expected to attend and sup together.

Let us look in upon these master-spirits of their age on a winter's evening in the year 1764. Take notice of the company, for men of mark are here.

Who is that strange-looking man with the gigantic body, the huge massy face, seamed with the scars of disease, wearing a brown coat, and black worsted stockings, and a gray wig with scorched foretop, whose hands are dirty, the nails bitten and pared to the quick? See how his eyes and mouth move with convulsive twitches, and the heavy form rolls, as with puffs and snorts the words come forth: "Why, sir!" "What then, sir?" "You don't see your way through the question, sir." That is Dr. Samuel Johnson, the author of the *Tatler*, the *Rambler*, "Rasselas," and the "Lives of the Poets," and also of a Dictionary which testifies to inexhaustible patience and diligence, and reveals the treasures of a well-stored mind. He is a man who never writes a line save on the side of virtue and truth, and who has passed through many bitter struggles on his way to fortune and to fame. He is a great and a wise man, a Christian man, moreover; and one who in a time when Hume, Gibbon, and Voltaire are endeavouring to introduce a universal scepticism, stands forth as the champion of religion, and contends earnestly for the truth of the Christian faith.

That young Scotch lawyer, whose silly egotism

and impertinent curiosity make him at once the bore and the laughing-stock of the whole of that brilliant club—who is weak, vain, pushing, and garrulous; who can he be? Now he flatters Johnson; now he catechizes him; anon he puts to him such a question as this: “What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby?” This is no other than James Boswell, the first of biographers, who has written one of the best books in the world—a book in which the great Johnson eats, drinks, walks and talks before us, and yet who was himself weak, foolish, and contemptible.

That curiously gentleman-like man, with a speaking-trumpet at his ear, who talks well, and with a gracious and diffused good-humour smiles blandly upon all, that is Sir Joshua Reynolds, the celebrated painter, and who now in his fortieth year is already in the receipt of nearly £6,000 per annum.

Yonder small, agile, restless man, with a dark eye full of genius and expression; whose ready wit is rewarded by peals of laughter, and whose consummate knowledge of stage effect gives a zest to his anecdotes, is David Garrick, the great tragic actor, who melts his audience to tears as he depicts the sorrows of Othello, and who makes them shrink as the white-haired Lear curses his ungrateful daughters.

And who is that dressed in the gaudiest of colours, claret coat, sky-blue vest, black velvet

pantaloon, and with a silver-laced hat under his arm ; whose face is plain, the features harsh and pitted with small-pox, and whose figure is low and ungainly ? That is Oliver Goldsmith himself, whose conversation, a strange contrast to his writings, is silly, empty, and noisy. Horace Walpole described him as an inspired idiot. At a club meeting held at the St. James's Coffee House, a party of his acquaintance wrote epitaphs on his imaginary death. Amongst others, Garrick wrote the following couplet :

“ Here lies poor Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, and talk'd like poor Poll.”

There, too, is the cold, polished, and sceptical Gibbon, the greatest historian, and Jones, the greatest linguist of the age. And there is Bennet Langton, distinguished by his skill in Greek literature, and for the sanctity of his life ; and there is Topham Beauclerc, renowned for his knowledge of the gay world, his fastidious taste, and his sarcastic wit.

But who is that, greater than all, dividing at the early age of thirty-three the supremacy over such a society with Johnson ? Listen to him as he pours forth in one constant strain the stores of argument and eloquence he is thirsting to employ on a wider stage. Hear and be amazed at the variety of his knowledge and its practical application ; the fund of astonishing imagery ; the ease of philosophic illustration, the overpowering copiousness of words, in which he has never had a

rival. That is Edmund Burke, one of the wisest and greatest men Ireland has produced; before whom lies a grand political career, and who will shortly earn a name as an eloquent and brilliant statesman of imperishable fame.

Such were the men who, as members of "The Club," gradually became a formidable power in the commonwealth of letters; whose verdicts pronounced on new books were sufficient to sell off a whole edition in a day, or to condemn the sheets to the service of the trunk-maker and the pastrycook.

It has been already said that Goldsmith's conversation was a great contrast to his writings. "Sir," said Johnson, "rather than not speak he will talk of what he knows himself to be ignorant, which can only end in exposing him." "He could not conceal what was uppermost in his mind," says Davies. "He blurted it out," says Johnson, "to see what became of it." And yet Boswell himself admits that he was often very fortunate in his witty contests, even when he entered the lists with Johnson.*

* An instance was remembered by Reynolds. He, Johnson, and Goldsmith were together one day, when the latter said he could write a very good fable; mentioned the simplicity which that kind of composition requires; and observed that in most fables the animals introduced seldom talked in character. "For instance," said he, "the fable of the little fishes, who saw birds fly over their heads, and envying them, petitioned Jupiter to be changed into birds. The skill," he continued, "consists in making them talk like little fishes." At this point he observed Johnson shaking his sides and laughing, whereupon he made this home-thrust: "Why,

We now behold Goldsmith slowly mounting from obscurity to fame. He removed from the apartments in Wine Office Court to a new lodging on the library staircase of the Temple. This change took place in an early month of 1764.

Still, all was not bright with Goldsmith yet. He had to struggle on with the ills of poverty. Towards the close of 1764, his rent was so long in arrear that his landlady pressed him for payment within doors, while the bailiffs beset him without. The debtor in his distress sent a messenger to Johnson, and Johnson sent back the messenger with a guinea, and promised to follow speedily. He came, and found that Goldsmith had changed the guinea, and had got a bottle of madeira and a glass before him. Johnson put the cork into the bottle, and began to talk to him on the means of

Mr. Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think ; for if you were to make little fishes talk they would talk like whales." On one occasion they had at supper, rumps and kidneys. Dr. Johnson expresses his satisfaction with "the pretty little things," but observes that "one must eat a good many of them before being satisfied." "Aye, but how many of them," asks Goldsmith, "would reach to the moon?" Johnson expresses his ignorance, and, indeed, remarks that that would exceed even Goldsmith's calculation, when the ready humorist observes : "Why, one, sir, if it were long enough !" Johnson confessed himself beaten : "Well, sir, I have deserved it. I should not have provoked so foolish an answer by so foolish a question." Dr. Johnson had but a poor opinion of his practical common-sense. When it was proposed to send him travelling in search of some improvements in arts and mechanics to be introduced into England, "Goldsmith," he said, "is the most unfit of all men to go on such an inquiry. Sir, he would bring you home a grinding-barrow, which you see in every street in London, and think he had produced a wonderful improvement."

procuring money. Goldsmith said that he had a novel ready for the press. Johnson looked into it, saw its merit, and, taking it to a bookseller, sold it for £60. He brought the money to Goldsmith, who discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for using him so ill. The novel which was thus ushered into the world was the charming "Vicar of Wakefield."

But before the "Vicar of Wakefield" appeared in print came the great crisis of Goldsmith's literary life. In Christmas week, 1764, he published a poem entitled "The Traveller." It was the first work to which he put his name, and it at once raised him to the rank of a legitimate English classic. The opinion of the most skilful critics was that nothing finer had appeared in verse since the fourth book of "The Dunciad." Johnson pronounced it a poem to which it would not be easy to find anything equal since the death of Pope. The verse has a sweet and mellow flow, while the diction, rich and choice as it is, is at the same time exquisitely plain. The whole poem with its appropriate imagery, its deep harmony of colouring, its happy and playful tenderness, and its philosophic tone, appeals at once and directly to the heart. Macaulay thus describes its plan :

"An English wanderer, seated on a crag among the Alps, near the point where the great countries meet, looks down on the boundless prospect, reviews his long pilgrimage, recalls the variety of scenery, of climate, of government, of religion, of national character, which he has observed, and

comes to the conclusion, just or unjust, that our happiness depends little on political institutions, and much on the temper and regulation of our minds.

While the fourth edition of "The Traveller" was on the counters of the booksellers, "The Vicar of Wakefield" appeared, and rapidly obtained a popularity which it maintains to the present day. No doubt the story has some faults of construction—that it contains some improbabilities; but, nevertheless, the charm of the book is such that in reading it we remember the beauties, while we overlook the faults. Its pages glow with mingled humour, wit, and pathos; a tender, and true, and wise vein of thought runs freshly through the narrative; and, underlying the incidents of the story, there is a vein of reflection fitted to make us patient in suffering—to give us an undoubting reliance on the providence of God, while it renders us charitable to the faults and infirmities of others. Who that has ever read the book can forget the hero of the fable, Dr. Primrose, the pastor, parent, and husband; his helpmate, with her motherly cunning and housewifely prudence, triumphing in her lamb's-wool and gooseberry-wine; Olivia, preparing herself for the arduous task of converting a rakish lover by studying the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday; Moses, his hat and white feather, his sale of Dobbin the colt, and his purchase of the gross of green spectacles? There, too, was the Squire, proving from Aristotle that relatives are related; the rosy Flamborough girls;

with their red top-knots; the sharper, and his knowledge of the world; Mr. Burchall, with his plain common-sense; and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs, whose pretensions are summed up in that expressive monosyllable—"Fudge."*

The success which had attended Goldsmith as a novelist emboldened him to try his fortune as a dramatist. He wrote "The Good-natured Man"—a piece which had a worse fate than it deserved. Garrick refused to produce it at Drury Lane. It was acted at Covent Garden, but coldly received. The author, however, cleared by his benefit-nights, and by the sale of the copyright, no less than £500—five times as much as he had made by "The Traveller" and "The Vicar of Wakefield" together.

In 1770 appeared "The Deserted Village." Its success was instant and decisive. It ran through several editions in a few months. It was pub-

* Sir Walter Scott says: "We read 'The Vicar of Wakefield' in youth and age; we return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature." Goethe, the great German poet and philosopher, declared in his eighty-first year that it had been his delight at twenty; that it had formed part of his education, and influenced his tastes and feelings throughout life; that he had recently read it over again with renewed delight; and Schlegel, the celebrated German critic and scholar, recorded his opinion that the gem of European works of fiction is "The Vicar of Wakefield." We certainly cannot close the book without feeling that Goldsmith's prose is a model of purity and grace, of facility and clearness, of the most delicate humour and the most touching pathos. The style cannot be surpassed.

lished on May 26, and on August 16 a fifth edition appeared. When it was read to Gray, he listened to it with fixed attention, and soon exclaimed, "This man is a poet!" "What true and pretty pastoral images!" exclaimed Burke, years after the poet's death, "has Goldsmith in his 'Deserted Village!' They beat all: Pope, and Phillips, and Spenser too, in my opinion." Goethe tells us the transport with which the circle he now lived in hailed it, when they found themselves once more in another beloved Wakefield; and with what zeal he at once set to work to translate it into German! We are reminded by Forster, in his "Biography of Goldsmith," that it is beautifully said by Campbell, that "fiction in poetry is not the reverse of truth, but her soft and enchanted resemblance"; and this ideal beauty of nature has seldom been united with so much sober fidelity as in the groups and scenery of "The Deserted Village."

Macaulay finds fault with this poem for two reasons. In the first place the theory is false, and is opposed to true political economy. But is this judgment just? Goldsmith only decries the inroads of that monopolizing wealth which drives the peasant to emigration, and traces much of the sorrows of the poor to "trade's proud empire," which has so often proved a transient glory and an enervating good. He laments the state of society, "where wealth accumulates, and men decay." But though the accumulation of wealth

has not brought about man's decay, nor is "trade's proud empire" threatened with extinction; yet the lesson Goldsmith seeks to teach can never be thrown away. He rebukes that selfish spirit of luxury and pride which, imitating the pomp and solitude of feudal abodes, without their hospitality and protection, has surrounded itself with parks and pleasure-grounds, and indignantly "spurned the cottage from the green." "It is a melancholy thing to stand alone in one's own country," said the Lord Leicester who built Holkham, when complimented on the completion of that princely dwelling. "I look round—not a house is to be seen but mine; I am the giant of Giant Castle, and have eat up all my neighbours."

The second fault with which Macaulay charges this poem is, that it is made up of incongruous parts:

"The village in its happy days is a true English village. The village in its decay is an Irish village. The felicity and the misery, which Goldsmith has brought close together, belong to two different countries, and to two different stages in the progress of society. He had surely never seen in his native island such a moral paradise—such a seat of plenty, content, and tranquillity, as his Auburn. He had assuredly never seen in England all the inhabitants of such a paradise turned out of their homes in one day, and forced to emigrate in a body to America. The hamlet he had probably seen in Kent; the ejection he had probably seen in Munster; but by joining the two he has produced something which never was, and never will be, seen in any part of the world."

It is with great diffidence that one ventures to differ from so masterly a critic as Macaulay, yet must a lance be broken with him here.

On the broad question of poetry we would ask, is the poet obliged to observe all the unities of time, place, and action? Was Shakespeare himself so bound? In "As You Like It," for instance, many of the persons of the play, if names go for anything, are French, the scene is laid in France; and yet what can be more English than the scene: the forest of Arden—and yet not the Warwickshire Arden—with its green boughs and shimmering leaves, its grassy knolls, and murmuring streams where the

"Poor sequestered stag,
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,
Did come to languish : augmenting the swift brook
With its big round tears"?

Is the poet to describe nothing but what is seen in real life? Must his poems be literal transcripts of what passes before the eye; or, selecting his own incidents and scenery, may he not leave this dull region of earth for the sunny realms of fancy and imagination? But narrowing the question to matter-of-fact, and granting, as must be granted, that everything in the poem is English, the feelings, incidents, descriptions, and allusions, have there been in England no improvements made at the expense of the population, no dismantled cottages, no ruined hearths, as in Ireland and Scotland?

However, the popularity of the poem is a sufficient vindication of its truth to nature, as well as of its feeling, its tenderness, its pathos, and

harmonious versification. The village inn; the busy mill; the fence; the furze; the hawthorn shade; the decent church; the simple pastor; the schoolmaster; the innocent joys of the country, rise up before us as we read.

I give his simple and beautiful description of the village pastor :

“Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil’d,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher’s modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e’er had chang’d, nor wish’d to change his place;
Unskilful he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion’d to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn’d to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings, but reliev’d their pain;
The long-remember’d beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruin’d spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claim’d kindred there, and had his claims allow’d;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sate by his fire and talk’d the night away;
Wept o’er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and shew’d how fields were won.
Pleas’d with his guests, the good man learn’d to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits, or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

“Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And ev’n his failings lean’d to Virtue’s side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watch’d and wept, he pray’d and felt for all.
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledg’d offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov’d each dull delay,
Allur’d to brighter worlds, and led the way.

“ Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismay’d,
The reverend champion stood. At his control,
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul ;
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whisper’d praise.

“ At church with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorn’d the venerable place ;
Truth from his lips prevail’d with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With ready zeal, each honest rustic ran ;
Even children follow’d with endearing wile,
And pluck’d his gown, to share the good man’s smile.
His ready smile a parent’s warmth exprest,
Their welfare pleas’d him, and their cares distress ;
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.
As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

The following is a graphic and amusing portrait of Reynolds :

“ Here Reynolds is laid, and, to tell you my mind,
He has not left a wiser or better behind ;
His pencil was striking, resistless and grand ;
His manners were gentle, complying and bland ;
Still born to improve us in every part,
His pencil our faces, his manners our heart :
To coxcombs averse, yet most civilly steering,
When they judg’d without skill he was still hard of hearing :
When they talk’d of their Raphaels, Correggios and stuff,
He shifted his trumpet,* and only took snuff.”

And here it may be well to say a few words on Goldsmith’s claims as a poet. A poet he was, and a true one. In the power of expression ; in

* Sir Joshua Reynold’s was so deaf as to be under the necessity of using an ear-trumpet in company.

melody; in a polished versification, he is hardly surpassed by any singer. Though he was an Irishman, all regard him as an English poet; and no poem, whether Auburn was in reality Lissoy or not, could be more thoroughly English in form and feeling than "The Deserted Village." As we read it we seem to see

"The blossom'd furze unprofitably gay";

to catch the smell of the hawthorn bush, white with may, under whose shade the rustic lovers sit; to hear the murmurs from the village, the milk-maid's song, and the voices of

"The playful children just let loose from school."

Nor these sounds alone do we hear, but also

"The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind."

We turn with pleasure from much of our modern poetry, with its artifice and obscurity and straining after effect, to a poem so simple and so natural, so graceful and tender, so melodious and so pathetic, as "The Deserted Village." It is like leaving a heated room and the glare of the gas for the cool morning air, with the scent of flowers and the song of birds, the full-leaved trees and the blue sky.

Sir Walter Scott thus speaks of Goldsmith's poetry: "It would be difficult to point out one among the English poets less likely to be excelled in his own style than the author of 'The Deserted Village.' Possessing much of the compactness

of Pope's versification, without the monotonous structure of his lines; rising sometimes to the swell and fulness of Dryden, without his inflations; delicate and masterly in his descriptions; graceful in one of the greatest graces of poetry—its transitions; alike successful in his sportive or grave, his playful or melancholy mood, he may long bid defiance to the numerous competitors whom the friendship or flattery of the present age is so hastily arraying against him."

While Goldsmith was writing "the Deserted Village" and "She Stoops to Conquer,"* he was employed on works of a very different kind—works from which he derived little reputation, but much profit. He compiled for the use of schools a "History of Rome," by which he made £300; a "History of England," by which he made £600; a "History of Greece," for which he received £250; a "Natural History," for which the bookseller covenanted to pay him 800 guineas. Though Goldsmith's knowledge was not very accurate, and he committed some strange blunders, yet he was, as all must acknowledge, "an unequalled master of the arts of selection and condensation"; "and few writers have done more to make the first steps in the laborious road to knowledge easy and pleasant."

* In 1773 Goldsmith produced his second play at Covent Garden, "She Stoops to Conquer." On this occasion his genius triumphed. The broad humour of this comedy, or rather farce, in five acts, kept the audience in a constant roar of laughter.

Goldsmith was at this time a prosperous man ; his fame was great, and continually rising. He changed his abode, and purchased chambers in Brick Court, Middle Temple, for which he gave £400. He furnished the rooms handsomely, and we hear of Wilton carpets, blue morine-covered mahogany sofas, chimney-glasses, Pembroke and card tables, and tasteful bookshelves. Exactly below Goldsmith's were the chambers of Blackstone ; and the rising lawyer, at this time finishing the fourth volume of his "Commentaries," is reported to have made frequent complaint of the distracting social noises that went on above. Very likely while Blackstone was deep in the mysteries of the feudal system, his investigations were interrupted by the merry companions of our poet singing lustily "The Three Jolly Pigeons."

Poor Goldsmith soon exhausted the profits of his writings, and began a system of waste which involved him in difficulties he never surmounted. "He spent twice as much as he had," says Macaulay. "He wore fine clothes, gave dinners of several courses, paid court to venal beauties. He had also, it should be remembered to the honour of his heart, though not of his head, a guinea, or five, or ten, according to the state of his purse, for any tale of distress, true or false." Macaulay also accuses him of being from boyhood a gambler, and "at once the most sanguine and the most unskilful of gamblers." This charge Forster declares to be founded on a

trifling indiscretion ; and let us vainly hope that the friend and companion of Johnson, Burke, and Reynolds, was not guilty of this fatal vice.

It may be well to record in this place the charm thrown over poor Goldsmith's life by his friendship with Mrs. Horneck, Captain Keene Horneck's widow, and her two charming daughters—at the time of his introduction to them girls of nineteen and seventeen. The eldest, Catherine, "Little Comedy" as she was called, was engaged to a Mr. Bunbury, second son of a baronet of an old family in Suffolk, and one of the cleverest amateur artists of his day. The youngest, Mary, to whom was given the loving nickname of the "Jessamy Bride," exerted strange fascination over Goldsmith. "Heaven knows," says Forster, "what impossible dreams may at times have visited the awkward, unattractive man of letters !" He bought his finest clothes to figure at their country house at Burton ; he wrote them droll verses, and had in their society many a pleasant holiday. The sisters heartily liked him ; cheered him and pitied him ; loved him and laughed at him ; and the happiest hours of the later years of his life were passed in their presence. In the kind and friendly company of Mrs. Horneck and her fair daughters, he made a visit to Paris, which he has described in a letter of most pleasant humour written to Sir Joshua Reynolds.

His later years were clouded by sorrow, and difficulties, and distress. His improvidence in-

volved him in embarrassments from which he sought to extricate himself by temporary expedients to meet his debts, to escape from bailiffs and reproachful creditors. He obtained advances from booksellers by promising to execute works which he never began. But at length this source of supply failed. He owed more than £2,000, and he saw no hope of being able to pay it. His spirits and health gave way. He was attacked by a nervous fever, which he thought himself competent to treat. Rejecting the advice of medical men, he prescribed for himself. The remedies he took aggravated the malady. He was induced to call in physicians of skill, but still his weakness and restlessness continued. He could get no sleep; he could take no food. It now occurred to Dr. Turton, who attended him, to put a pregnant question to his patient. "Your pulse," he said, "is in greater disorder than it should be from the degree of fever which you have. Is your mind at ease?" "No, it is not," was Goldsmith's melancholy answer. They were the last words of the dying man. None sadder could be spoken in that hour when heart and flesh fail. He died on April 4, 1774, having then lived five months beyond his forty-fifth year. When Burke was told, he burst into tears. Reynolds was so moved by the news that he left his painting-room, and did not re-enter it that day. The staircase in Brick Court is said to have been filled with mourners—women without

a home, with no friend but him they had come to weep for ; outcasts of that great, solitary, wicked city, to whom he had never forgotten to be kind and charitable. Other mourners he had, two. His coffin was reopened at the request of Miss Horneck and her sister—the “Jessamy Bride”—that a lock might be cut off from his hair. It was in the possession of the latter when she died, after nearly seventy years. She lived quite into our time. Hazlitt saw her, an old lady, but beautiful still, in Northcote’s painting-room, and she told the eager critic how proud she always was that Goldsmith had admired her.

Goldsmith was laid in the churchyard of the Temple ; but the spot was not marked by any inscription, and is now forgotten.

Reynolds suggested that Goldsmith should be honoured by a monument in Westminster Abbey ; and the spot selected was over the south door in Poets’ Corner. It consisted of a medallion portrait and tablet. Nollekens was the sculptor, and, two years after Goldsmith’s death, the inscription was written by Johnson. His great friend inscribed a touching and beautiful epitaph in Latin upon the stone which bears his name. It contains the famous line :

“Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit.”*

Such was the life, and such the death, of a poet whom the world regards with gentle love

* He left no species of writing untouched by his pen, nor touched any that he did not embellish.

and pity, with admiration for his sportive humour, the grace of his diction, and the beauty of his style; well disposed, if it could, to forget the errors and faults of such a man. The story of his life and of his death is very sad.

There can be no doubt that the great want in his character—that which lay at the root of all that we must deplore in his life—that which clouded the death-bed from which to the question, “Is your mind at ease?” came the melancholy response, “No, it is not,” was the want of a deep and solid religious faith. True, he could paint, and that beautifully, the Christian pastor, all whose “serious thoughts had rest in heaven,” at whose control

“Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul”;

but, alas! like many a preacher, “he recked not his own read,” and was like the sign-post on a road, which points, not leads the way.

But I would not “draw his frailties from their dread abode.” It is unwillingly and with regret that they are touched on at all. “Let not the frailties of Oliver Goldsmith be remembered,” said Johnson; “he was a very great man.”

When we think of him, let it be kindly, as of the gentle moralist, the consummate poet, the genial-hearted Irishman, full of affection and pity, of guileless simplicity, and of the most romantic, if not impulsive and thoughtless, benevolence. Nor let us forget his many struggles, his years of unremitting drudgery and desolate toil, his life

that had never known the aids and pleasures of a home, or those sweet domestic influences which might have saved him from temptations in which he was ensnared. It should be remembered, too, that in an age of general syco-phancy, when authors fawned upon the great, Goldsmith dedicated his three principal works to no lordly or courtly patron, but the one to his brother, the other two to Reynolds and Johnson; that in a time when literary men thought it no shame to write for hire, Goldsmith scorned to prostitute his pen to party ends, and refused the proffered bribes; that in a period when wit often took the form of coarseness and ribaldry, Goldsmith wrote nothing to offend the purest or most delicate mind.

Before leaving him, let us give a glance at his cenotaph within the grand walls of the solemn Abbey. Not far from his medallion portrait in Poets' Corner are the monuments which commemorate Rowe, and Thomson, and Garrick. Here, too, is a monument to Gay, the author of the famous "Beggars' Opera," the fables written for the education of the Duke of Cumberland, and the popular ballad of "Black-Eyed Susan." It is painful to think that it was at his own desire that Pope placed these words beneath his bust:

"Life is a jest, and all things show it :
I thought it once, but now I know it."

The lines are surely out of harmony with the place.

The ashes of the great Samuel Johnson, and of the witty and elegant Sheridan, rest near ; and the wise and eloquent Isaac Barrow sleeps not far away. There from his pedestal the grave and thoughtful Addison looks down ; and there is the fine statue of Thomas Campbell, the poet of the "Pleasures of Hope," the pedestal bearing the lines from "The Lost Man" :

" This spirit shall return to Him
Who gave its heavenly spark ;
Yet think not, Sun, it shall be dim
When thou thyself art dark !
No ! it shall live again and shine
In bliss unknown to beams of thine
By Him recalled to breath
Who captive led captivity,
Who robb'd the grave of victory,
And took the sting from death !"

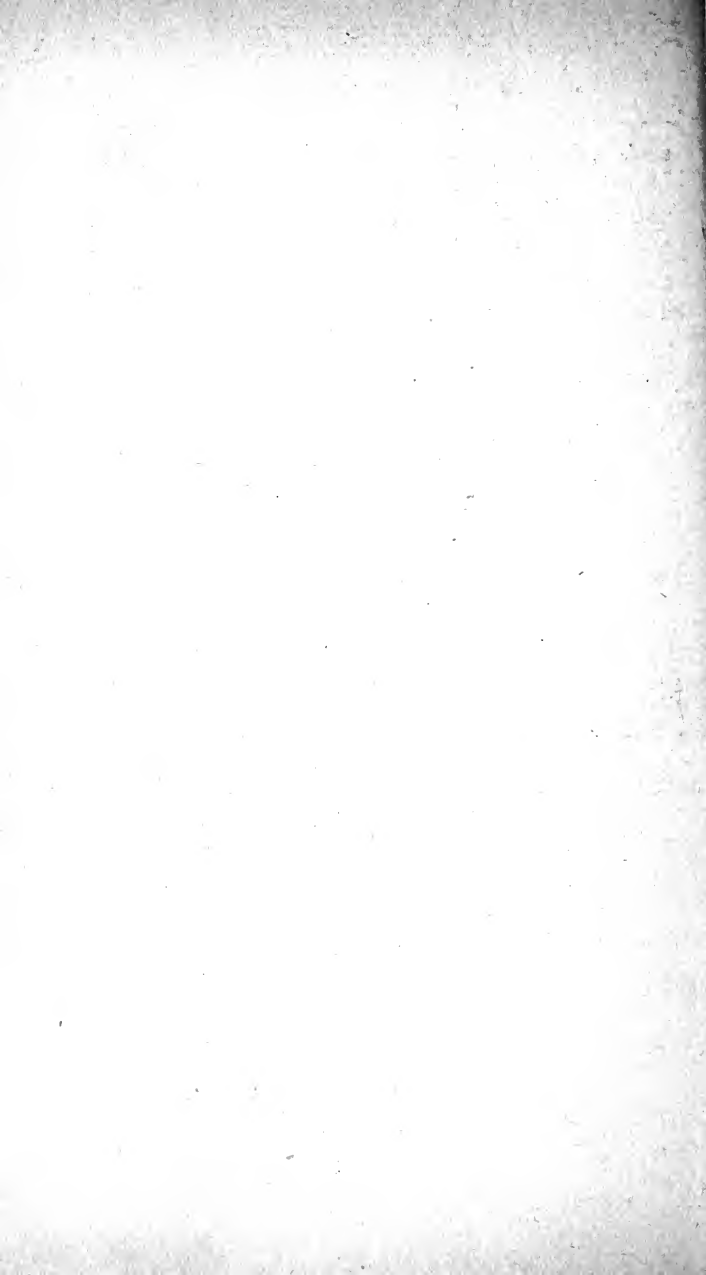
And there, last but not least, nay, first and greatest of all, the bard of Avon, the immortal Shakespeare, who opens before our eyes a scroll with the sublime words :

" The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a wreck behind."

These are earth's mighty ones—illustrious names on the beadroll of fame—men to be remembered so long as England is a nation and the English language is spoken. And when wandering through the long-drawn aisles of the old Abbey we gaze on the monuments of poets, and statesmen, and orators, and historians, we may thank God who has given

such gifts unto men. Who can estimate the influence that they have exercised over the moral and intellectual life of the country ; or how much their genius has contributed to the English language of its majesty, its beauty, and its force ? Truly, of the poets, amongst whom Goldsmith occupies if not the highest at least a high rank, we may say in the words of Wordsworth :

“ Blessings be with these, and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler lives, and nobler cares—
The poets who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays !”



WILLIAM COWPER.



WILLIAM COWPER.

THERE is, no doubt, a good deal of justice in the remarks made by Mr. T. H. Ward, the Editor of "The English Poets," in his introduction to the poems of Cowper. "It is undoubtedly true," he writes, "that Cowper is little read by the very class which is most given to the reading of poetry, and most competent to judge it. He is a favourite with the middle classes. He is not a favourite with the cultivated classes." I am afraid, however, that he is not much read in the present day, even by the "middle classes"—that to them his poetry is a name, and nothing more. Other poets, more musical in their diction, more dramatic in their conception, and broader in their religion, have "pushed him from his stool." And yet, ignorance of this poet is a loss to any class, cultivated or otherwise; and whatever be the limitations of his genius, or however what Matthew Arnold calls "his morbid religion and lumbering movement" may prevent his general acceptance, they who fail to make acquaintance with his poems deprive themselves of much pleasure and enjoyment. We certainly

ought not, from any dread of his Puritanism—which is so distasteful to the preachers of culture, the prophets of “Sweetness and Light”—to neglect a poet of whose great poem, “The Task,” M. Taine* can thus write :

“At length poetry has again become lifelike ; we no longer listen to words, but we feel emotions ; it is no longer an author, but a man, who speaks. His life is there perfect, beneath its black lines, without falsehood or concoction ; his whole effort is bent on removing falsehood and concoction. When he describes his little river, his dear Ouse, ‘slow winding thro’ a plain of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o’er,’ he sees it with his inner eye ; and each word, cæsura, sound, answers to a change of that inner vision. It is so in all his verses ; they are full of personal emotions, genuinely felt, never altered or disguised : on the contrary, fully expressed, with their transient shades and fluctuations ; in a word, as they are—that is, in the process of production and distinction ; not all complete, motionless and fixed as the old style represented them. Herein consists the great revolution of the modern style. The mind, outstripping the known rules of rhetoric and eloquence, penetrates into profound psychology, and no longer employs words, except to mark emotions.”

The truth is, that few who have written the story of Cowper’s life, or have criticised his poems, have had any sympathy with his religious views, which therefore, not understanding, they have misrepresented, and which, so far from driving him to madness and suicide, raised him often from the depths of profound dejection, and shed a light over the gloom of his despair. His was a timid and over-sensitive nature. Had he been cast in a ruder and rougher mould, the mental balance would not have been so easily destroyed. His

* “History of English Literature.” By H. A. Taine. Vol. ii., p. 247.

biographers and critics, one and all, stumble against what they call his Calvinism. For instance, the editor of "The English Poets," writes thus :

"Since we are to look to poetry for the successful application of ideas to life, we shall look in vain to 'The Task'; for the ideas are those of an inelastic Puritanism, that would maim and mutilate life in the name of religion. . . . He began with the resolve to make religion poetical, and he succeeded in making poetry religious—but religious after a manner which his excellent editor, Mr. Benham, himself a clergyman, calls 'hard and revolting.'"

Mr. Stopford Brooke writes: Cowper's "Calvinism, which he seems to have had before meeting with Newton, combined with the tendency to madness in him, had produced a religious insanity, which, occurring at intervals through his life, finally fixed its talons on his heart, and never let him go, even in the hour of death. He believed himself irrevocably doomed by God." But as Mr. Goldwin Smith, in his "English Men of Letters," very properly reminds us, "When Cowper first went mad, his conversion to Evangelicism had not taken place; he had not led a particularly religious life, nor been greatly given to religious practices, though, as a clergyman's son, he naturally believed in religion, had at times felt religious emotions, and, when he found his heart sinking, had tried devotional books and prayers. The truth is, his malady was simple hypochondria, having its source in delicacy of constitution and weakness of digestion, combined with the influence of melancholy surroundings. . . . The

catastrophe was brought on by an incident with which religion had nothing to do." But while Mr. Goldwin Smith allows that in Cowper's case "religion was not the bane," and that his recovery from madness "came in the form of a burst of religious faith and hope," he has evidently no sympathy with Cowper's religious opinions, and seems well pleased to think that the Evangelicism which he professed is now ready to vanish away. It is thus he writes on this subject :

"However obsolete Cowper's belief, and the language in which he expresses it, may have become for many of us, we must take it as his philosophy of life. . . . He belongs to a particular religious movement, with the vitality of which the interest of a great part of his works has departed, or is departing."

Mr. Goldwin Smith seems to be of the number of those who imagine that Evangelicism—"inelastic Puritanism," if they like the definition better—has become old and effete, and is behind the intelligence of the age, and that nothing now remains but to dig its grave and consign it honourably to the tomb. They are ready to seize the pen and write its epitaph, but will not even chant a requiem over its departure. We trust these prophets of a decaying Evangelicism are mistaken in their predictions. Sad will it be if Calvinism, which lies at the root of all that is strongest and most forcible in Christian character, which has been the creed of some of the greatest men that ever lived, and which has played no unimportant part in the history of our nation, giving England

the religious and political freedom she now enjoys—sad will it be if Calvinism, “the spirit which rises in revolt against untruth,” the spirit which nerves us to strive with the giant powers of evil, and which opens a refuge in times of trouble, because it makes us strong and calm in the thought of a Sovereign Will whose out-goings are love, is ever to become a dead faith of the past. If either our cultivated or middle classes are deterred from reading Cowper through dislike of his religious opinions, which were those of the men who, in the sixteenth century, overthrew spiritual wickedness, and purged England from lies, and which have been crystallized in the Articles of the English Church—then we can only mourn that it is so, and reluctantly believe that “Evangelicism has now been reduced to a narrow domain by the advancing forces of Ritualism on the one side, and of Rationalism on the other.”* But the fact is, that Cowper’s Calvinism was not of a harsh, rigid, or ugly type; for, as he held the doctrine, it was but the cloud resting on the Mercy-seat, while out of the cloud there came the voice, “God is Love.” This shall be shown by some *quotations* from his Poems.

Other reasons, however, may be given for the neglect of Cowper by the present generation of Englishmen. Other poets, of greater power and passion, of more mastery over their materials, of deeper emotion and higher gifts of expression,

* “Cowper,” by Goldwin Smith.

have, like new stars, "swam into our ken" since his day. The popularity of Byron and Burns, of Wordsworth and Coleridge, of Keats and Shelley, of Tennyson and the Brownings, may account for something of the forgetfulness into which Cowper has fallen. But if these poets be more fervent in spirit and more faultless in work; if the melody of their verse be more perfect, and if the themes on which they write be more generally attractive to the intellect of this century, yet has Cowper merits of his own—wit, humour, satire, a love of nature, and a fidelity to truth—which will give him a foremost place amongst our great singers while the English language endures. Besides being a poet, and one of the first to call poetry back from conventionality to Nature, and in thus being "the precursor of Wordsworth," he is, according to Southey, "the best of English letter-writers"; and these letters, written without any thought of their meeting the public eye, are entirely artless, and full of charm.

It will not be out of place, before looking at some of his characteristics as a poet, to give a brief sketch of his simple and pathetic life.

William Cowper was born on November 15 (old style), 1731, at the Rectory, Great Berkhamstead. His father, the Rev. John Cowper, D.D., was rector of the parish, and chaplain to George II. His mother was Anne Donne, daughter of Roger Donne, of Ludham Hall, in Norfolk, and was descended from several noble

houses—indeed, by four different lines from Henry III., King of England. The poet alludes to this in the famous piece which he wrote on receiving her picture :

“ My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth ;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—
The son of parents passed into the skies.”

Pope, who had been the idol of his age and its poetical standard, but with whom the harmony and finish of his verse were more than the subjects on which they were employed, was lingering out his last days in his villa at Twickenham, on the side of the silver Thames. The Artificial School of Poetry, which touched the ear but did not reach the heart, fine and subtle though it was, was now to be succeeded by a newer and higher melody, which derived its inspiration from Nature.

Cowper was but six years old when he lost his mother. In a beautiful poem called, “ Lines on the Receipt of my Mother’s Picture,” he has given voice to the sorrow which wrung his childish heart when news was brought him that she was dead. Her death soon made itself felt by peculiar trials. His father married again—how soon we are not told—and the child seems scarcely to have lived at home after this, the first great loss of his life. At the age of six, the poor little sickly boy was sent from home to a boarding-school at Market Street, in Hertfordshire—“ the first of those sad changes,” remarks Southey, “ through which a gentle spirit has to

pass in this uneasy and disordered world." Many hardships had the delicate boy to contend with while at this school, and his trials were greatly aggravated by the barbarities of a cruel lad, whose delight it was to torment him. "I well remember," he says, "being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than his knees, and I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than any other part of his dress." As specks had appeared on Cowper's eyes, and they became subject to inflammation, he was removed from the boarding-school and placed under the care of an eminent oculist, in whose house he spent two years. The disease in his eyes did not yield to treatment, and, strange to say, he owed his recovery to a severe attack of small-pox when he was thirteen years of age. In his tenth year he was sent to Westminster School, where he excelled, as he tells us, "at cricket and football," and became a good classical scholar. His skill in athletic games beguiled him into a novel idea. "I became," he says, "so forgetful of mortality, that, strange as it may seem, surveying my activity and strength, and observing the evenness of my pulse, I began to entertain, with no small complacency, a notion that perhaps I might never die." An incident befell him at this time which startled him out of this foolish thought. Crossing St. Margaret's churchyard late one evening, he was attracted by a glimmering light, and found a grave-digger at work, who, just as Cowper came to the spot, threw up a skull, which struck

him on the leg. This gave an alarm to his conscience, and he remembered the incident as among the best religious documents which he received at Westminster. While he was passing through the fifth form, Vincent Bourne, celebrated for his Latin verse, was the usher. This man was slovenly to the point of being disgusting, and as good-natured as he was dirty. The Duke of Richmond once set fire to his greasy locks, and boxed his ears to put it out again. His indolence rendered his accomplishments useless to his pupils. "I lost," says Cowper, "more than I got by him, for he made me as idle as himself." It was while Cowper was at Westminster, and when about the age of fourteen, that he first tried his hands at English verse, in a translation of one of the elegies of Tibullus.

Amongst his school-fellows were several men of note and genius. He numbered amongst his early friends Robert Lloyd, a minor poet and essayist; Charles Churchill, author of "The Rosciad"; and Colman and Cumberland, both writers of comedies for the stage. His other remarkable contemporaries at Westminster were Elijah Impey, afterwards Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bengal, and Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of the Province.

We next hear of Cowper in a solicitor's office. "At the age of eighteen," he says, "being tolerably well furnished with grammatical knowledge, but as ignorant of all kinds of religion as the satchel

on my back, I was taken from Westminster, and having spent about nine months at home, was sent to acquire the practice of the law, with a London attorney." Here he had for a fellow-clerk the future Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who had been educated at Canterbury school. Cowper had no taste for the plodding business of the law; and the master to whom he was articled allowed him to be as idle as he wished. Upon leaving Mr. Chapman's, in his twenty-first year, he took chambers in the Middle Temple, "becoming," he says, "in a manner, complete master of myself." And it was now, when he first began to live alone, that the sad malady began, which, at different times and under different symptoms, darkened so much of his life. After a year spent in terrible despondency, he at length betook himself to prayer, which brought him some consolation and ease.

Being recommended change of air, he went to Southampton, and a few days after his arrival, he walked, one bright sunny morning, to a beautiful spot about a mile from the town, and as he sat on an eminence by the sea, his heart became suddenly joyous. After this break in the cloud, his mind for a season alternated between light and gloom. He formed good resolutions—he broke them; he composed some prayers—he ended by throwing them into the fire.

In the June of 1754, he was called to the Bar, though he had taken no pains to qualify himself

for his profession ; for his life hitherto had been that of a careless man of the world. Two years later he lost his father, and three years after he removed to the Inner Temple. At the age of twenty-eight he was made Commissioner of Bankruptcy. He now formed an attachment to one of his cousins, Theodora Jane, second daughter of his uncle, Ashley Cowper, a woman of great beauty, wit, and accomplishments.*

His cousin's affections were as deeply engaged as Cowper's ; but her father, fearing, no doubt, the morbid melancholy of his nephew, absolutely refused his consent to their marriage, and they were separated. " If you marry William Cowper, what will you do ?" asked the father. " Do, sir ?" she replied, with the saucy readiness of a high-spirited girl ; " wash all day, and ride out on the great dog all night." She remained constant to the poet all her life, retaining a proud affection for him to the last, and died unmarried.

We must now look at Cowper when he has reached his thirty - second year, his patrimony nearly spent, and with little apparent prospect of his ever repairing the consequences of his own idleness by a fortune of his own getting. He had relations who possessed some political influence. The office of the Clerk of the Journals in

* This uncle was so diminutive in person that, when late in life he wore a white hat lined with yellow, the poet said that " if it had been lined with pink he might have been gathered by mistake for a mushroom, and sent off in a basket."

the House of Lords fell vacant, and was in the gift of Cowper's kinsman, Major Cowper, as patentee. Cowper had coveted the office, expressing the hope that the Clerk of the Journals, who held the office, might die ; and " God," he says, " gave me my heart's desire, and in it, and with it, an immediate punishment of my crime." At the same time the joint offices of Reading Clerk and Clerk of the Committees, which were of much greater value than the Clerkship of the Journals, were vacated by resignation ; and these being also in Major Cowper's gift, were offered to the poet, who accepted them. " But with them," he says, " he at the same time seemed to receive a dagger in his heart." He felt the impossibility of executing a business of so public a nature ; and after a week of much anxiety, he besought his kinsman to give him instead the Clerkship of the Journals, which fell more readily within the scope of his abilities. But fresh difficulties arose from the opposition of a powerful party among the Lords, who wished the nomination of another candidate ; and as the merits of the rival claimants were to be tested by an examination at the bar of the House, Cowper's mind was clouded by terrors, and his conflicting emotions brought on a nervous fever. Under the stress and strain of an ever-increasing agitation, his mind began to give way. " I now," he says, " began to look upon madness as the only chance remaining." His great fear was that his senses would not fail him in time

enough to excuse his appearance at the bar of the House of Lords, and prevent the trial for the Clerkship. He became mad, and with madness came the sore temptation of his life—suicide.*

The desire for death was succeeded by a shuddering fear of the grave. From this time he was haunted by imaginary horrors, was scared by visions, and terrified by dreams. He believed that he had sinned against the Holy Ghost, and had no longer any interest in Christ. It was at

* He has told us, with the utmost minuteness, the story of his attempts at self-destruction. We see the whole scene, as he tries to reason himself into the belief that suicide is lawful; as he buys from the apothecary a half-crown phial of laudanum; as he hurries into the fields with the intention of swallowing it; and as, the strong love of life again returning, he resolves rather to fly to France, change his religion, and enter a monastery, and thus escape the ordeal which he dreads. Again, we see him in another mood, bent once more on self-destruction, and hurrying in a hackney coach to the Tower wharf that he may throw himself into the river. But as the tide is low, and a porter seated on the quay, he returns to his chambers, and tries to swallow the laudanum; but here he is interrupted by his laundress and her husband, and at length the poison is thrown away. On the night before the day appointed for the examination before the Lords, he lies with an open penknife pressed against his heart, but his courage fails, and he dares not drive it home. His last effort was to hang himself, and using his garter, he forms it into a noose, and placing it about his neck, he fastens it to the top of his bed-frame. He makes three several attempts at suicide, all of which fail from the slipping of the noose or the breaking of the frame; but on the last occasion, when consciousness is gone, and he comes to himself, only after he has fallen on the floor, it is seen how near he has been to death by the stagnation of the blood under one eye, in a broad crimson spot, and by the red circle which extends round his neck. Horror-stricken, he staggered back to bed, an overwhelming conviction of sin seized upon his soul, and his conscience was harrowed by a sense of God's anger.

this juncture that he sent for his friend, the Rev. Martin Madan; and though Cowper used to think him an enthusiast, yet he now felt that if there were any balm in Gilead, this was the man to administer it to him. The interview of the two friends was much blessed to the poet, and the wounded spirit lost something of its pain, though the mind had by no means recovered its balance. Nay, greater terrors were behind, and madness for a time made a total wreck of that fine, but too sensitive, spirit. He was removed by his friends to St. Albans, where Dr. Cotton, a physician of great skill, and well-known humanity, kept a private asylum for the insane. Medical treatment and religious intercourse (for Dr. Cotton was a man of piety, and a writer of hymns) restored his distempered mind to health. Seated one morning in a chair, near the window of his room, he took up a Bible, and opened it for comfort and instruction. The verse which met his eye was the twenty-fifth of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission" [the passing over] of sins that are past, "through the forbearance of God." "In a moment I believed and received the Gospel." "Oh, the fever of the brain!" he says—in one of his beautiful letters to Lady Hesketh, after his recovery—"to feel the quenching of *that* fire is indeed a blessing, which I think it impossible to receive without the most

consummate gratitude. My affliction has taught me a way to happiness, which, without it, I never should have found." On his release from the asylum, he resigned the Commissionership of Bankruptcy; and as a return to his profession was out of the question, his relations combined to raise a small income for him, just enough for his support. His brother John, who first tried to find lodgings for him at or near Cambridge, failing in this, placed him at Huntingdon, within riding distance, so that the brothers could meet once a week. He took to Huntingdon the attendant who waited on him at Dr. Cotton's asylum, and he brought from the same place a friendless boy, whose case had excited his interest, and for whom he afterwards provided, by putting him into a trade. In that charming strain of quiet humour, which was as natural to him as to breathe, he unfolds, in a letter to Hill, a difficulty he experienced in his novel task of keeping house for himself and his servant :

"A man cannot always live on sheep's heads, and liver and lights, like the lions in the Tower; and a joint of meat in so small a family is an endless encumbrance. My kitchen bill for last week amounted to four shillings and tenpence. I set off with a leg of lamb, and was forced to give part of it away to my washerwoman. Then I made an experiment upon a sheep's heart, and that was too little. Next, I put three pounds of beef into a pie, and this had like to have been too much, though my landlord was admitted to a share in it. Then, as to small beer, I am puzzled to pieces about it. I have bought as much for a shilling as will serve at least a month, and it has grown sour already. In short, I never knew how to pity poor housekeepers before; but now I cease

to wonder at that politic cast, which their occupation usually gives to their countenance, for it is really a matter full of perplexity."

The result of what he called his "good management," and clear notions of economical affairs, was that in three months he spent the income of a twelvemonth. He then came to the conclusion that, to avoid bankruptcy, he must be boarded as well as lodged. He also began to feel the want of companionship. The visits of his neighbours were not frequent; and as "cards and dancing were the professed business of the inhabitants," he would have derived no pleasure from a closer intercourse with the gayer portion of the community. Under these circumstances, he was induced to take a step which had the happiest influence on his future life.

At Huntingdon he formed a strong and lasting friendship with the Unwin family, consisting of the Rev. William Unwin, a clergyman, his wife, a woman of accomplishments and intelligence, and their son and daughter. To Mrs. Unwin he was strongly drawn from the first; and his happiest hours were those spent in the society of these agreeable Christian friends.

After a time Cowper found a place in this family as a boarder, and in the November of 1765 he became an inmate of their house. He had hardly been two years with these friends when Mr. Unwin was killed by a fall from his horse. But Cowper still continued to live with Mrs. Unwin, and the friendship between these

two—the man of thirty-six and the woman of forty-three—as calm and sober as it was beautiful, remained unbroken till death. The death of Mr. Unwin was soon followed by the removal of the whole family to Olney, in response to the proposal of that remarkable man, the Rev. John Newton, who was curate of the parish, and happened to be passing through Huntingdon at the time of Mr. Unwin's death. A close friendship soon sprung up between the poet and the curate. Newton thus speaks of Cowper, in a memoir of him which he began but never finished :

“For nearly twelve years we were never separated for twelve hours at a time, when we were awake and at home. The first six I passed in admiring and attempting to imitate him ; during the second six I walked pensively with him in the ‘Valley of the Shadow of Death.’ . . . He loved the poor ; he often visited them in their cottages, conversed with them in the most condescending manner, sympathized with and comforted them in their distresses ; and those who were seriously disposed were often cheered and animated by his prayers.”

Nor was Cowper without some intellectual employment congenial to his taste and suited to his poetical talents ; for Newton was compiling a volume of hymns, and engaged the valuable help of his friend. The hymns were undertaken “with the hope of promoting the faith and comfort of sincere Christians, and of perpetuating the remembrance of an intimate and endeared friendship.” Whatever was the motive, the Church has to thank God for these sacred songs—the breathings of genius, sanctified by devotion.

For a few years the life of the poet flowed

calmly on, and its even tenor was only interrupted by the death of his dear and only brother in the year 1770. But the shadow of the coming malady fell at times on his path; and in the January of 1773 the terrible darkness returned. Again he was plunged in the profoundest dejection; again he attempted suicide. In one of his solitary walks through the fields near Olney, and before the disease had reached its height, a mysterious presentiment took possession of his mind, and returning home he composed the last of the hymns contributed to the Olney Collection :

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform ;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.”

For seven years his harp was mute and its chords unstrung. His mind was little better than a sad and melancholy discord—

“Like sweet bells jangled, out of time, and harsh.”

It was not until the year 1780 that the mind, which had wandered into the region of eclipse, again emerged into the sunshine. And even then the light was often chequered and broken. Though his letters and verses breathe a spirit of humour and playfulness, yet a deep undertone of sadness may be heard running through all, as the sobbing of the storm lingers on the ear even after the heavens have resumed their blue, and the thunder has died amongst the distant hills.

When he began to recover, his health was promoted by gradual amusement and occupation. He employed himself in his garden, he built houses for his plants, he made some landscape drawings, he played with his tame hares—pets and companions which grew up under his care, and continued to interest him nearly twelve years, when the last survivor died quietly of old age.

About the time that Cowper's mind regained its wonted balance, John Newton was called from Olney to a parish in London. Henceforth the intercourse of the two friends was carried on by letters. Cowper's feelings flowed down to his pen, and his letters to Newton are the outpourings of his heart. Some are grave, some are playful; some that have the appearance of prose to the eye, have the sound of rhyme to the ear; and others are perfect poems in themselves; for often, in the midst of a letter to his friend, he would throw his thoughts into harmonious and spontaneous verse.

Mrs. Unwin was the first who prevailed on him to undertake something of greater pith and moment than he had as yet produced. She urged him to write a poem of considerable length; and as moral satire was equally congenial to his taste, and in accordance with his views, she suggested as his theme, "The Progress of Error." He acted on her advice, and speedily followed up "The Progress of Error" with three other poems of the same serious nature: "Truth," "Table

Talk," and "Expostulation." On sending "Table Talk" to Mr. Newton, he said :

"It is a medley of many things, some that may be useful, and some, for aught I know, may be very diverting. I am merry, that I may decoy people into my company ; and grave, that they may be the better for it. Now and then I put on the garb of a philosopher, and take the opportunity that his disguise procures to drop a word in favour of religion. In short, there is some pith ; and here and there are bits of sweetmeat, which seems to entitle it justly to the name of a certain dish the ladies call 'a trifle.'"

He was fifty years of age when his first volume of poems was published.

Cowper is a striking instance of a man of mature age, whom true conversion of heart made a great poet. He was kindled into real poetic fervour by the fire off God's altar. Southey has preserved some of his earlier efforts, and it is but truth to say that they are trivial and commonplace. His perception of natural beauty was quickened by grace, and his penetration by the power of the Gospel was the means of the revival of true poetic taste in England. Calvinism, which Coleridge somewhere calls "unimaginative," and which his biographers regard as harsh and narrow, and for which there is no name in their vocabulary too severe, gave the impulse to the most delicate appreciation of the natural world, and of the grace and tenderness of the domestic affections.

While at Olney, Cowper formed a friendship with a lady who not only introduced a new charm into his life, but exercised a fortunate influence over his literary career. This was Lady Austen,

a brilliant, lively, charming widow, who paid a summer's visit to her sister who lived in the neighbourhood of Olney. Waiving ceremony, Lady Austen paid the first visit to Mrs. Unwin and the poet, which they returned with all due state and ceremony. "They fell in love with each other at once," in the most simple form of the words, and an intimacy sprang up between them there and then. Before many weeks passed, the plan of settling in Olney had entered Lady Austen's mind, and was encouraged by her two friends.

In the autumn of 1782 she became an inmate of the vicarage. This was, no doubt, the happiest time of Cowper's life. Lady Austen sang to him, talked to him, told him stories, and threw a light into the gloom and a variety into the monotony of his life. Some of his most beautiful songs were composed for her harpsichord. We are indebted to her, not only for the noble dirge on "*The Loss of the Royal George*," but for the immortal ballad of "*John Gilpin*." While Gilpin was running a successful career through town and country, Cowper's poem of "*The Task*," the work which made him the most popular poet of the age, was passing through the press. To Lady Austen belongs the honour of having suggested this finest production of the poet's genius. She had often urged him to try his powers in blank verse, and at last he promised to comply with her request, if she would give him a subject.

“Oh,” she replied, “you can never be in want of a subject; you can write upon any: write upon this sofa.” “The answer,” says Southey, “was made with a woman’s readiness, and the capabilities of such a theme were apprehended by Cowper with a poet’s quickness of perception.” It may be noted here that the friendship with Lady Austen, which began in 1781, ended in 1784. What brought it to a close is not known. His biographers throw little or no light on the cause of the rupture. Scott is reported to have said, in words which do scant justice to the fairer sex, “Who can be surprised that two women should be continually in the society of one man, and quarrel, sooner or later, with each other?” But as Southey observes, in reference to the coming of Lady Hesketh to Olney, “We shall soon see two women continually in the society of this very man without quarrelling with each other.” All that is clearly known about this mysterious interruption to their friendship is that Lady Austen went, and with her went the gleam of light she had brought into the poet’s life.

In 1786 Cowper, at the instance of Lady Hesketh, removed from Olney to Weston, a neighbouring village, more cheerful and on higher ground than Olney, where his bright and vivacious cousin rented for him a house belonging to Mr. Throckmorton, and close to his grounds. Here he had an abode fit for a poet. It is thus he describes his workshop in the garden: “The

grass under my windows is all bespangled with dew-drops, and the birds are singing in the apple-trees among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke the muse."

He had a short attack of insanity while at Weston, but the cloud passed, and all was well. He made the acquaintance of Hayley, his future biographer, and of two youths whose enthusiasm was very sweet to him, one of them a relation—John Johnson—and Samuel Rose.

Cowper was now sixty-one, and Mrs. Unwin nearly seventy. The last gleams of sunshine were fading out of his life. Mrs. Unwin was attacked with paralysis, and her illness added to the poet's dejection and distress. As she was unable to move out of her chair, he became her absolute nurse, and with all the delicacy and tenderness of a woman anticipated her wishes and supplied her wants. Hayley persuaded them to visit him at Eastham, in the vain hope that a change might do Mrs. Unwin good. Here Cowper's portrait was painted by Romney, and here the host did all in his power to make his guests happy. But Cowper longed for the quietness of Weston, and to Weston they returned, Mrs. Unwin none the better for her journey. Lady Hesketh's health had failed, and she had been obliged to go to Cheltenham and Bath; so he lost the support and comfort of her presence. His condition was deplorable. "He sat still and

silent as death," speaking to no one; asking nothing; dwelling in an awful, visionary world of his own diseased and morbid fancies. Hayley now proved himself a true friend, and, in conjunction with Cowper's relations, removed the poet and Mrs. Unwin from Weston to North Tuddenham, in Norfolk, to be placed under the affectionate care of Mr. Johnson, Cowper's relative and friend. Hoping that both the invalids might derive some benefit from the sea view, Mr. Johnson took them to the village of Maudsley, on the Norfolk coast, where "he surrendered himself to the solemn effect which the waves produced, and found something inexpressibly soothing in the monotonous sound of the breakers." They again removed to Dunham Lodge, near Swaffham, and finally to East Dereham, a town in the centre of Norfolk, where, two months after their arrival, Mrs. Unwin died at the age of seventy-two. This was in the year 1796. The extreme depression of Cowper's spirits was such that he was barely conscious of his loss. On being taken to see the dead body of his friend, he uttered one passionate cry of grief, and never mentioned her name again.

The last years of Cowper's life were, like the prophet's roll, "written within and without with mourning, lamentation, and woe." The mind, thoroughly unstrung, gave forth no notes but those of darkness and despair; and his last original poem, "The Castaway," founded on an incident in Anson's Voyage, a powerful but painful

poem, is, as Southey says, all circumstances considered, one of the most affecting that ever was composed. The first verse runs thus :

“Obscurest night involved the sky,
The Atlantic billows roar’d,
When such a destin’d wretch as I,
Washed headlong from on board ;
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.”

But though he could see nothing above or around him but clouds and darkness, his friends saw a life of humble faith and patience, of meekness, and prayer. It was with him as with Moses when he left the mount where he communed with God. The glory of his face, invisible to himself, was visible to all around. He died so peacefully in the afternoon of April 25, 1800, that of the five persons who stood at the foot and side of the bed, no one knew the moment of his departure. “From that moment till the coffin was closed,” Mr. Johnson says, “the expression with which his countenance was settled was that of calmness and composure, mingled, as it were, with holy surprise.” The fever of the brain was quenched ; the sorrow of the heart over ; the aching head was at rest ; and the tossing arms were still. There was “beauty for ashes ; the oil of joy for mourning ; the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

The poet was buried in that part of Dereham Church called St. Edmund’s Chapel. Lady Hesketh caused a monument to be erected over

his remains, and Hayley supplied the inscription. There, too, a tablet to the memory of Mrs. Unwin was raised by two other friends (it is not said by whom), impressed by a just and deep sense of her extraordinary merit. For this also the inscription was composed by Hayley.

I have preferred to give the above sketch of the salient points in the poet's life without breaking it by any remarks on his poetry, so as not to interrupt its pathetic interest; but this paper would be incomplete without some reference to the poems which have made Cowper celebrated. Mr. Goldwin Smith, in his volume in the series of "English Men of Letters," does the poet but scant justice, and hardly gives him, to my thinking, his due place among the great singers. He and the editor of "The English Poets" differ from each other on the question of poetical criticism. The former strangely says: "Poetry can never be the direct expression of emotion"—an opinion which is sufficient to condemn him as a critic; and the latter says that "ascents into the higher music of the great poets demand some moving force of passion, or some inspiring activity of ideas; and for neither of these can we look to him." They both, however, agree in thinking that Cowper is read, "not for his passion or for his ideas, but for his love of Nature, and his faithful rendering of her beauty, and also for the melancholy interest of his life, and for the simplicity and loveliness of his character." Such

criticism appears to me very inadequate ; and I believe Cowper will be read by all lovers of true poetry for the charm of his descriptions, for the sincerity and truth of his sentiments, for his delicate wit, as well as for his sunny playfulness and sparkling humour.

“The Task” was the *renaissance* of poetry in England, the first bold departure from the worn-out moulds in which poetical composition had been run for many years. In this poem Cowper cast aside the old traditions, and instead of modelling his verses on the plan of Dryden and Pope, went at once to the fountain-head, and there drank of the pure Castalian spring. Turning away from mere artificial melody of rhythm and mechanical smoothness of versification, he sought to charm the ear and touch the heart through the lofty music of the blank verse with which Milton had delighted his generation. And Nature was his theme, not the Nature of the poets who preceded him—academic, classic, unreal, where every clown became a love-sick shepherd, and every rustic wench a sentimental Chloe, such as we see in the Dresden china figures on our chimney-pieces—but Nature homely and simple, fresh, and fair, and fragrant, as you may see her in the country every day. With this music he touched and charmed the popular ear and heart. What pictures are set before us in “The Task”! The woodman, with his dog at his side, on his way to the forest ; the

redbreast warbling on the wintry boughs; the peasant's cottage planted on the side of the leafy hills; the post-boy twanging his horn with a light heart as he crosses the bridge thrown over the swelling flood, and all indifferent to the tidings of joy or sorrow which he carries in his bag; and, again, the harmony of the village bells as they come softly on the evening gale. And what gives an especial charm to his love for Nature is, that this man, whose religion is so unlovely in the eyes of his biographers, looks with the eye of a Christian on all its scenes. As he gazes on the sky above or the earth beneath, they wear for him a deeper glory, because, with filial confidence and devout reverence, he can say, "My Father made them all." Every sound comes to his ear laden with some tone of the eternal melodies. In the deep harmonies of ocean he hears the voice of Him who "setteth His bounds to the sea, which it cannot pass"; in the roar of the storm he catches the echoes of *His* footsteps who "walketh on the wings of the wind." He has, too, a love of freedom, a delight in friendship, a passionate scorn of affectation, and vanity, and ambition, a revolt against meanness, and cowardice, and oppression, and a true tenderness for the poor and the feeble, which make his poems as fresh and beautiful to-day as they were a hundred years ago. His shorter poems are rich in music, charm, and spontaneous flow. Is there any need to mention the "Dirge for the Loss of the *Royal*

George," and "*Boadicæa*"; the "*Lines* supposed to have been written by Alexander Selkirk"; "*The Nightingale and the Glow-worm*," and "*The Needless Alarm*"; "*The Poplar Field*," or "*The Shrubbery*"? Need I recall the "*Lines* on his Mother's Picture," so simple and so pathetic, or those "*To Mary*," written in the autumn of 1793? This last is one of the most touching and perfect of his poems. Hayley believed it to be the last original piece that he produced at Weston, and questions whether any language on earth can exhibit a specimen of verse more exquisitely tender. The reader will not be sorry to have it quoted here :

"TO MARY.

"The twentieth year is wellnigh past
Since first our sky was overcast ;
Ah ! would that this might be the last !
My Mary !

"Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow :
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary !

"Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary !

"For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary !

"But well thou play'dst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads, with magic art,
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary !

"Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream ;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary !

"Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary !

"For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see ?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary !

"Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign ;
Yet gently prest, press gently mine,
My Mary !

"Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,
That now at every step thou movest,
Upheld by two, yet still thou lovest,
My Mary !

"And still to love, though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary !

"But, ah ! by constant heed I know,
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary !

"And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary !"

And now for a few remarks on the hymns which he contributed to the Olney Collection. They are of unequal merit, and the rhymes are sometimes faulty. But the poet often breaks out ; and whatever be the faults of a few, these hymns have become part of the mother tongue ; and in every part of the earth where the English

language is spoken, they may be heard in hut and hall, in church and chapel. Some of them come upon us like the sob of a wounded heart. Some thrill with the notes of a triumphant joy. Some are passionate; some are personal; some are devout. But all catch their inspiration from Christ and from His cross.

What thirstings of the soul after the fountain of all good, what earnest pleadings for a fresh baptism of the Spirit, are condensed into that hymn :

“Oh, for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame”!

What noble thoughts clothed in fitting words adorn that gem of sacred poetry called “Light shining after Darkness”! How grandly it opens!—

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform ;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.”

What admirable imagery he uses in the same poem to express the beneficent design of affliction!—

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

Again :

“His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour ;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.”

I shall not give any quotations from his letters, though it would be grateful to me to do so,

but they fully deserve separate attention, for many of them are of consummate beauty, many full of quiet humour, and many of Horatian wit. Some of the letters which have the appearance of prose to the eye, have the sound of rhyme to the ear ; and others are perfect poems in themselves ; for often in the midst of his correspondence with a friend, he would throw his thoughts into humorous and spontaneous verse.

I shall, however, give some extracts from his poems, and in doing so, I cannot do better than begin with his fine description of a true poet :

“ I know the mind that feels indeed the fire
The muse imparts, and can command the lyre,
Acts with a force, and kindles with a zeal,
Whate'er the theme, that others never feel.
If human woes her soft attention claim,
A tender sympathy pervades the frame,
She pours a sensibility divine
Along the nerve of every feeling line.
But if a deed not tamely to be borne
Fire indignation and a sense of scorn,
The strings are swept with such a power, so loud,
The storm of music shakes the astonish'd crowd.
So when remote futurity is brought
Before the keen inquiry of her thought,
A terrible sagacity informs
The poet's heart ; he looks to distant storms,
He hears the thunder ere the tempest lowers,
And, armed with strength surpassing human powers,
Seizes events as yet unknown to man,
And darts his soul into the dawning plan.
Hence, in a Roman mouth, the graceful name
Of prophet and of poet was the same.
Hence British poets, too, the priesthood shared,
And every hallow'd druid was a bard.”

See now what irony he throws into the description of the insincere poet, whose verses do not

flow from emotion or feeling, but are "made up" for the occasion, and are utterly artificial and hollow. The conventional poet is treated with caustic severity :

"From him who rears a poem lank and long,
To him who strains his all into a song,
Perhaps some bonny Caledonian air,
All birks and braes, though he was never there,
Or, having whelp'd a prologue with great pains,
Feels himself spent, and fumbles for his brains ;
A prologue interdash'd with many a stroke,
An art contrived to advertise a joke,
So that the jest is clearly to be seen,
Not in the words—but in the gap between ;
Manner is all in all, whate'er is writ,
The substitute for genius, sense, and wit."

Is there in any other religious poem a more beautiful or tender outburst of the Christian spirit than the following ? It is full of the rapture of humble, confiding, and adoring love :

"All joy to the believer ! He can speak—
Trembling yet happy, confident yet meek.
Since the dear hour that brought me to Thy foot,
And cut off all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but Thine,
Nor hoped but in Thy righteousness divine ;
My prayers and arms, imperfect and defiled,
Were but the feeble efforts of a child.
Howe'er performed, it was their brightest part
That they proceeded from a grateful heart ;
Cleansed in Thine own all-purifying blood,
Forgive their evil and accept their good ;
I cast them at Thy feet—my only plea
Is what it was, dependence upon Thee ;
While struggling in the vale of tears below,
That never fail'd, nor shall it fail me now."

I give the next quotation, not only for its intrinsic truth and beauty, but for the sentiment stated in the lines in *italics*. They prove that

Cowper's Calvinism was very different from what his critics declare it to be. It knows nothing either of a limited atonement or of reprobation.*

“But grant the plea, and let it stand for just,
That man makes man his prey because he *must*,
Still there is room for pity to abate
And soothe the sorrows of so sad a state.
A Briton knows, or if he knows it not,
The Scripture placed within his reach, he ought,
*That souls have no discriminating hue,
Alike important in their Maker's view,
That none are free from blemish since the fall,
And love divine has paid one price for all.*
The wretch that works and weeps without relief
Has one that notices his silent grief.
He from whose hands alone all power proceeds
Ranks its abuse among the foulest deeds,
Considers *all* injustice with a frown,
But *marks* the man that treads his fellow down.
Begone, the whip and bell in that hard hand
Are hateful ensigns of usurped command,
Not Mexico could purchase kings a claim
To scourge him, weariness his only blame.
Remember, Heav'n has an avenging rod ;
To smite the poor is treason against God.”

The question of slavery was beginning to trouble the great heart of England, and we see in the following passage how Cowper's soul rose in revolt against injustice and wrong ; how he sympathized with the oppressed and trodden down,

* We have from Cowper's own pen a statement of the doctrine of Calvinism, as he held it. In his “Fragment of an intended Commentary on ‘Paradise Lost,’” we come upon this sentence. Remarking on the line, “Some I have chosen of peculiar grace,” he says : “But the Scripture, when it speaks of those who shall be saved, and of the means by which their salvation shall be accomplished, holds out the same hope to every man, and asserts the same communication of light and strength to be necessary in all cases equally.”

and felt that liberty was amongst the greatest of Divine blessings :

“ Oh, could I worship aught beneath the skies,
That earth has seen, or fancy can devise,
Thine altar, sacred Liberty, should stand,
Built by no vulgar mercenary hand,
With fragrant turf, and flowers as wild and fair
As ever dress'd a bank, or scented summer air.
Duly, as ever, on the mountain's height
The peep of morning shed a dawning light ;
Again, when evening in her sober vest
Drew the gray curtain of the fading west,
My soul should yield thee willing thanks and praise
For the chief blessings of my fairest days ;
But that were sacrilege—praise is not thine,
But His who gave thee and preserves thee mine.”

What a rich and playful humour he throws into the sketch of the man who never knows his own mind, advancing opinions one moment and contradicting them the next :

“ Dubious is such a scrupulous good man—
Yes—you may catch him tripping if you can.
He would not, with a peremptory tone,
Assert the nose upon his face his own ;
With hesitation admirably slow,
He humbly hopes, presumes it may be so.
His evidence, if he were called by law
To swear to some enormity he saw,
For want of prominence and just relief,
Would hang an honest man and save a thief.
Through constant dread of giving truth offence,
He ties up all his hearers in suspense,
Knows what he knows as if he knew it not,
What he remembers seems to have forgot,
His sole opinion, whatsoe'er befall,
Centring at last in having none at all.
Yet, though he tease and balk your list'ning ear,
He makes one useful point exceeding clear ;
Howe'er ingenious on his darling theme
A sceptic in philosophy may seem,
Reduced to practice, his beloved rule
Would only prove him a consummate fool :

Useless alike in him both brain and speech,
Fate having placed all truth above his reach ;
His ambiguities his total sum,
He might as well be blind, and deaf, and dumb."

Here is an equally successful satirical sketch of a hypochondriac, a character unhappily not yet extinct. Every reader will possibly recognise an acquaintance :

"Some men employ their health, an ugly trick,
In making known how oft they have been sick,
And give us in recital of disease
A doctor's trouble, but without the fees ;
Relate how many weeks they kept their bed,
How an emetic or cathartic sped,
Nothing is slightly touched, much less forgot,
Nose, ears, and eyes, seem present on the spot.
Now the distemper, spite of draught or pill,
Victorious seem'd, and now the doctor's skill ;
And now—alas for unforeseen mishaps !
They put on a damp nightcap, and relapse ;
They thought they must have died, they were so bad ;
Their peevish hearers almost wish they had."

And now follows a description of a fretful, peevish man, the plague of the household, the annoyance of his friends, and the enemy of his own peace. Alas ! we are all too familiar with men of this class also :

"Some fretful tempers wince at every touch,
You always do too little, or too much ;
You speak with life in hopes to entertain,
Your elevated voice goes through the brain ;
You fall at once into a lower key ;
That's worse—the drone-pipe of a humble-bee.
The southern sash admits too strong a light,
You rise and drop the curtain—now 'tis night.
He shakes with cold—you stir the fire and strive
To make a blaze—that's roasting him alive.
Serve him with ven'son and he chooses fish,
With sole—that's just the sort he would not wish,

He takes what he at first professed to loathe,
And in due time feeds heartily on both ;
Yet still o'erclouded with a constant frown,
He does not swallow, but he gulps it down.
Your hope to please him, vain on ev'ry plan,
Himself should work that wonder if he can—
Alas ! his efforts double his distress,
He likes yours little, and his own still less ;
Thus, always teasing others, always teased,
His only pleasure is—to be displeased.”

I shall now give a beautiful passage on the effect of village bells ringing at eventide. We seem to hear them rising and falling on the breeze :

“ There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
And as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased
With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave ;
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.
How soft the music of those village bells
Falling at intervals upon the ear
In cadence sweet ! Now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous as the gale comes on.
With easy force it opens all the cells
Where mem'ry slept.”

Full of power and vigour are the lines in which he does honour to the preacher's throne—the pulpit—and magnifies the office of the ambassador of Christ. Equally full of cutting irony is the portrait that he draws of the clerical coxcomb :

“ I say the pulpit (in the sober use
Of its legitimate peculiar powers)
Must stand acknowledg'd, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of virtue's cause.
There stands the messenger of truth ; there stands
The legate of the skies ; his theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.

By him the violated law speaks out
 Its thunders ; and by him, in strains as sweet
 As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
 He 'stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
 Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart,
 And, arm'd himself in panoply complete
 Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms
 Bright as his own, and trains by every rule
 Of holy discipline to glorious war,
 The sacramental host of God's elect.
 Are all such teachers ? Would to heav'n all were !
 But hark—the Doctor's voice—fast wedged between
 Two empirics he stands, and with swoln cheeks
 Inspires the news, his trumpet. Keener far
 Than all invective is his bold harangue,
 While through that public organ or report
 He hails the clergy, and defying shame,
 Announces to the world his own and theirs.
 He teaches those to read whom schools dismissed
 And colleges untaught ; sells accent, tone,
 And emphasis in score, and gives to pray'r
 Th' *adagio* and *andante* it demands.
 He grinds divinity of other days
 Down into modern use ; transforms old print
 To zig-zag manuscript, and cheats the eyes
 Of gall'ry critics by a thousand arts.
 Are there who purchase of the Doctor's ware ?
 O name it not in Gath ! it cannot be
 That grave and learned clerks should need such aid :
 He doubtless is in sport and does but droll,
 Assuming thus a rank unknown before,
 Grand caterer and dry-nurse of the Church."

There is no more noble passage in his poems
 than his justification of his censures on the
 injustice and wrong-doing that abound in the
 world. He grandly vindicates his cause :

"Twere well, says one, sage, erudite, profound,
 Terribly arch'd and aquiline his nose,
 And overbuilt with most impending brows,
 'Twere well could you permit the world to live
 As the world pleases. What's the world to you ?
 Much. I was born of woman and drew milk
 As sweet as charity from human breasts.

I think, articulate, I laugh, and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meandering there,
And catechise it well. Apply yon glass,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own ; and if it be,
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose
Keen enough, wise and skilful as thou art,
To cut the link of brotherhood by which
One common Maker bound me to my kind ?
True. I am no proficient, I confess,
In arts like yours. I cannot call the swift
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,
And bid them hide themselves in th' earth beneath ;
I cannot analyze the air, nor catch
The parallax of yonder luminous point
That seems half quenched in the immense abyss ;
Such powers I boast not—neither can I rest
A silent witness of the headlong rage,
Or heedless folly, by which thousands die,
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine.”

Some modern men of science might read with advantage the splendid lines upon the unceasing work of God in upholding and sustaining the Creation, of which He is the Great Author. They begin thus :

“ Nature is but a name for an effect
Whose cause is God. He feeds the sacred fire
By which the mighty process is maintained,
Who sleeps not, is not weary ; in whose sight
Slow-circling ages are as transient days.”

I must quote the following simple sonnet, whose beauty and delicacy cannot be exceeded in the language :

“ Mary ! I want a lyre with other strings,
Such aid from heav’n as some have feigned they drew,
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
And undebased by praise of meaner things

That ere thro' age or woe I shed my wings
 I may record thy worth with honour due,
 In verse as musical as thou art true,
 And that immortalizes whom it sings.
 But thou hast little need. There is a book
 By seraphs writ in beams of heavenly light,
 On which the eyes of God not rarely look,
 A chronicle of actions just and bright ;
 There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine,
 And since thou own'st that praise I spare thee mine.*

Before drawing to a close, I must remind the reader of the many verses that are used as familiar quotations.

Speaking of the youth who leaves college for his travels, to "make the grand tour," and finds all barren from Dan to Beersheba, he says :

"Returning, he proclaims by many a grace,
 By shrugs and strange contortions of his face,
 How much a dunce that has been sent to roam
 Excels a dunce that has been kept at home."

Here are other lines "familiar as household words" :

"Defend me, therefore, common-sense, say I,
 From reveries so airy, from the toil
 Of dropping buckets into empty wells,
 And growing old in drawing nothing up."

We often hear of

"The cups
 That cheer, but not inebriate :"

and

"The sacramental host of God's elect."

And this of knowledge and wisdom :

"Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
 Have oftentimes no connection ; knowledge dwells
 In heads replete with thoughts of other men ;
 Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.

* His lines on his Mother's Picture speak home to many a heart, and are full of a manly pathos which suggests "thoughts that lie too deep for tears."

Knowledge, a rude, unprofitable mass,
The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
Till smoothed, and squared, and fitted to its place,
Does but encumber whom it seems to enrich."

Again :

"United, yet divided, twain at once."

"God made the country, and man made the town."

"England, with all thy faults, I love thee still."

"Presume to lay their hand upon the ark."

"O winter ! ruler of the inverted year."

"He is the freeman whom the truth makes free."

"But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling, say—My Father made them all."

"Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true."

"His wit invites you, by his looks, to come,
But when you knock, it never is at home."

"Our wasted oil unprofitably burns."

"Beware of desperate steps. The darkest day,
Live till to-morrow, will have passed away."

How beautiful and familiar to most readers is the description of the millennium, when mankind shall become one brotherhood, knit together in the bonds of mutual unity and love. He dwells with delight on the universal regeneration of the race ; but it is a regeneration not brought about by art, or literature, or science, or by the gradual amelioration of the world under some new and broader theology, but a regeneration only made possible by the personal advent of Christ. The Saviour comes as the Redeemer, to visit earth in mercy, to descend propitious in His chariot "paved with love." The world rejoices in an

eternal spring. All creatures worship man, and all mankind one Lord, one Father. There is neither sin nor sorrow. All is harmony and peace. "Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once perfect, and all must be at length restored."

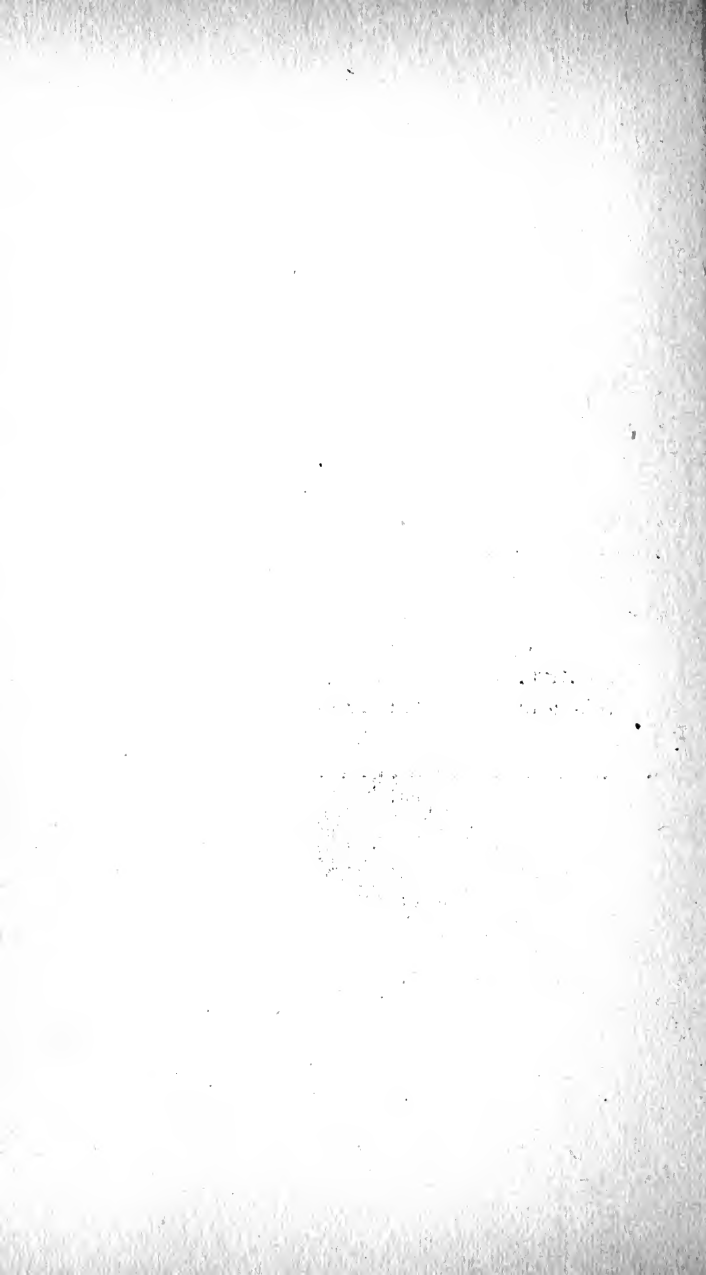
The whole passage is very beautiful, and full of a deep and passionate emotion. There can be no question that Cowper is a true poet, and a great poet. "The Task" proves his mastery over blank verse, while in his other poems there is a rhythm and cadence, a facility of expression, a use of clear and articulate language, a charm and a fancy, combined with infinite suggestions of beauty, which give him a foremost place amongst our great singers. He has been justly called "the poet of the affections," and he is eminently the Poet of Nature and Christianity. "Everything I see in the fields," he told Mr. Unwin, "is to me an object of delight; and I can look at the same rivulet, or at a handsome tree, every day of my life with new pleasure." In another letter he says: "I could spend whole days and moonlight nights in feeding on a lovely prospect. My eyes drink the rivers as they flow." In the fourth book of "The Task," he says that his "very dreams were rural":

"No bird could please me, but whose lyre was tuned
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me: never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sung,
The rustic throng beneath his favourite beech."

Sir James Mackintosh has observed with much truth that Cowper, instead of describing the most beautiful scenes in Nature, "discovers what is most beautiful in ordinary scenes," and with his "poetical eye and moral heart detected beauty in the sandy flats of Buckinghamshire."

But Cowper's inspiration is not only drawn from Nature, but from religion; and his poems, as we have remarked, breathe all the tenderness of the New Testament spirit. By words caught from the Saviour's life, he warns, comforts, and consoles—leads the heart to God, and elevates the soul to heaven.

If this sketch induces the reader to take Cowper down from the shelf, where, perhaps, he lies neglected by the side of more brilliant, more imaginative, or more sensuous poets, then the writer's aim will have been accomplished, and that which has been to him "a labour of love" will have been turned to fruitful account.



SIR WALTER SCOTT.



SIR WALTER SCOTT.

SIR WALTER SCOTT holds that place among novelists which Shakespeare holds among poets—that is, he is supreme among writers of fiction. In the description of scenery, in the power of what is known as word-painting, in spirit-stirring adventure, and vividness of fancy and breadth of humour—above all, in portrayal and development of character—he has not been surpassed by any other writer in the language since Shakespeare gave to the world his immortal dramas.

Such was Scott as an author, and of this we shall give proofs by-and-by; and what he was as a man—how true in all the relationships of life, how faithful, how generous, how free from jealousy towards his brother authors, how noble in prosperity, how courageous in adversity—will be shown before this sketch reaches its close.

We are told by Lockhart, in that best of biographies, where we find the man himself, in his habit as he lived, that the lines most characteristic of himself that Scott ever wrote were these, which form a motto to one of the chapters of “Old Mortality”:

“Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife !
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.”

Sir Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh on August 15, 1771, his father being descended from the younger branch of the great Border family of Buccleuch, and his mother, who was Miss Rutherford, the daughter of a physician, being a granddaughter of Sir John Swinton, who was the representative of a Scottish family famed for its knightly deeds and prowess on the battle-field. Sir Walter's great pride was to be an acknowledged member of one of the honourable families whose ancestors had fought under the banner of some noble leader ; and his chief ambition was to be the founder of a house from which should spring far-distant generations rejoicing in the name of “ Scott of Abbotsford.”

We have some interesting reminiscences from Sir Walter's own pen of the men whose blood ran in his veins. One of his ancestors, as he mentions in a letter to Miss Seward, was known as Auld Wat of Harden, whose son William, captured by Sir Gideon Murray of Elibank, during a raid of the Scots on Sir Gideon's lands, was given his choice between what may be considered two evils. He might choose between being hanged on Sir Gideon's private gallows and marrying the ugliest of Sir Gideon's three ugly daughters, “ Meikle-mouthed Meg,” who was said to bear away the palm for ugliness from the women of

four counties. Sir William was a handsome man. He took three days to make up his mind ; but after due consideration, he chose life and the large-mouthed lady, and found her, according to his illustrious descendant, not only an excellent wife, but a lady well skilled in pickling the beef which her husband carried off from the herds of his foes. For in those days it was customary, even with members of noble houses, to illustrate what Wordsworth has called—

“ The good old rule, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.”

It is said that Meg's descendants inherited her large mouth, and the poet was no exception to the rule.

Nor was Sir William the only distinguished ancestor of the poet and novelist, for his great-grandfather was that Walter Scott known in Teviotdale by the surname of “ Beardie,” because he would never cut his beard after the banishment of the Stuarts, and who not only lost, by his intrigues on their behalf, almost all that he had, but ran the greatest risk of being hanged as a traitor. In the introduction to the last canto of “ Marmion,” Sir Walter thus alludes to the faithful cavalier :

“ And thus my Christmas still I hold,
Where my great grandsire came of old,
With amber beard and flaxen hair,
And reverend, apostolic air,
The feast and holy tide to share,

And mix sobriety with wine,
And honest mirth with thoughts divine.
Small thought was his in after-time
E'er to be hitch'd into a rhyme ;
The simple sire could only boast
That he was loyal to his cost ;
The banished race of kings revered,
And lost his land—but kept his beard."

The second son of this "Beardie" was Sir Walter's grandfather, and from him he derived that sanguine and speculative disposition which had so much influence over his fortunes. Robert Scott, wishing to breed sheep, and having no capital, borrowed £30 from a shepherd, and the two made a journey into Northumberland together to purchase a flock near Wooler. The shepherd, more experienced in the matter, was to buy the sheep ; but when, after having met with what he considered to be a good investment, he returned to his master, he found him on the back of a fine hunter, on which he had spent all the money in hand. The speculation, however, proved to be a profitable one, for the horse displayed such excellent qualities when following the hounds of John Scott of Harden that it was sold for double the money paid down for its purchase. This incident in his family history was not forgotten in long after days by Sir Walter. Lockhart tells us how he had assembled about him in his "own great parlour," as he called it—the room in which he died—all the pictures of his ancestors that he could come by ; and in his most genial evening mood he seemed never weary of praising them.

The Cavalier of Killikrankie, brave, faithful, and romantic old "Beardie," a determined but melancholy countenance, was never surveyed without a repetition of the solitary Latin rhyme of his bow. He had, of course, no portraits of the elder heroes of Harden to lecture upon, but a skilful hand had supplied the same wall with a fanciful delineation of the rough wooing of "Meikle-mouthed Meg"; and the only historical picture, properly so called, that he ever bespoke, was to be taken (for it was never executed) from the "Raid o' the Redwire," when

"The Laird's Wat, that worthy man,
Brought in that surname weel began,"

and,

"The Rutherfords, with great renown,
Conveyed the town o' Jedburgh out."

The ardent but sagacious goodman of Sandy Knowe hung by the side of his father "Bearded Wat"; and often, when moralizing in his latter days over the doubtful condition of his ultimate fortunes, Sir Walter would point to "Honest Robin" and say, "Blood will out; my building and planting was but his buying the hunter before he stocked his sheepwalk over again." "And yet," Lockhart once heard him say, glancing to the likeness of his own staid, calculating father, "it was a wonder, too, for I have a thread of the attorney in me." "And so no doubt he had," adds his son-in-law, "for the elements were mingled in him curiously as well as gently."

In his study of Sir Walter in "English Men of

Letters," Mr. Hutton says that this "thread of the attorney was not the least of his inheritances, for from his father he certainly derived that disposition towards conscientious plodding, industry, legalism of mind, methodical habits of work, and a generous, equitable interpretation of the scope of all his observation to others, which, prized and cultivated by him as they were, turned a good genius which, especially considering the hare-brained element in him, might easily have been frittered away, or devoted to worthless ends, to such fruitful account, and stamped it with so grand an impress of personal magnanimity and fortitude."

Sir Walter's mother was a woman with great tenderness of heart, a well-stored mind, and a vivid memory; and he, the ninth of twelve children, six of whom died in early childhood, returned warmly her affection for himself. In Lockhart's "Life of Scott" we read how the evening after the poet's burial his executors in lifting up his desk found, arranged in careful order, a series of little objects which had obviously been so placed there that his eye might rest on them every morning before he began his tasks. These were: the old-fashioned boxes that had garnished his mother's toilette when he, a sickly child, slept in her dressing-room; the silver taper-stand which the young advocate had bought for her with his first five-guinea fee; a row of small packets, inscribed with her hand, and containing

the hair of those of her offspring who had died before her; his father's snuff-box and étui-case, and more things of the like sort, recalling "the old familiar faces." He had but one sister, who was somewhat of a querulous invalid, and whom he seems to have pitied almost more than he loved. In an autobiographical sketch of his early years we learn that he was an uncommonly healthy child for the first eighteen months of his life, and that then he had a teething fever which settled in his right leg, and, permanently contracting the limb, left a lameness which, though not severe, proved incurable. The child, because of his illness, was sent to reside with his grandfather, who lived at Sandy Knowe, near the ruined tower of Smailholme, celebrated in his ballad of "The Eve of St. John," in the neighbourhood of some fine crags. A housemaid was sent from Edinburgh to look after him, and up to these crags she used to carry him with a design, as she confessed to the housekeeper—due to incipient insanity—of murdering the child there and burying him in the snow. After the maid was dismissed the boy was sent out, when the weather was fine, under the charge of the shepherd, who would often lay him beside the sheep. In after-days Scott told Mr. Skene, when making an excursion with Turner, who was drawing his illustration of Smailholme Tower for one of Scott's works, that "the habit of lying on the turf there among the sheep and the lambs had given his mind a peculiar tender-

ness for these animals, which it had ever since retained." Being forgotten one day upon the knolls when a thunderstorm came on, his aunt ran out to bring him in, and found him shouting, "Bonnie, bonnie!" at every flash of lightning. His mother, a woman of good natural taste and feeling, had from his earliest years inspired him with a fondness for poetry, and he used to read aloud to her Pope's Homer, and old ballads of Border warfare, and legends of striking events in the romantic annals of his country. At six years of age he is described by Mrs. Cockburn as the most astounding genius of a boy she ever saw. "He was reading a poem to his mother when I went in. I made him read on. It was the description of a shipwreck. His passion rose with the storm. 'There's the mast gone!' says he; 'crash it goes; they will all perish!' After his agitation he turns to me: 'That is too melancholy,' says he; 'I had better read you something more amusing.'" When Mrs. Cockburn had left the room he told his aunt how much he liked her, for, said he, she was a *virtuoso* like himself. "Dear Walter," replied Aunt Jenny, "what is a *virtuoso*?" "Don't ye know? Why, it's one who wishes and will know everything."

At nine years of age he was sent to the High School in his native city, where his reputation as a classical scholar was not great, and where he glanced like a meteor from one end of the class to the other, gaining more praise for his interpreta-

tion of the spirit of his authors than for his knowledge of their language. He was a boy of a fascinating sweetness of temper, but underneath this lay a proud and masculine character, combined with strong common-sense. His sagacity in estimating the character of others appears from a story which he, towards the close of his life, told to Samuel Rogers. He had long desired to get above a school-fellow in his class, who defied all his efforts till Scott noticed that whenever a question was asked of his rival the lad's fingers grasped a particular button of his waistcoat, while his mind went in search of the answer. Scott at once felt that if he could remove this button the boy would be thrown out, and so it proved. The button was cut off, and the next time a question was put to the lad, his fingers being unable to find the button, and his eyes going in perplexed search after his fingers, he stood confounded, and Scott mastered by artifice the place which he could not gain by industry. "Often in after-life," was Scott's own comment to Rogers on this piece of strategy, "has the sight of him smote me as I passed by him, and often have I resolved to make him some reparation, but it ended in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him, for he filled some inferior office in one of the Courts of Law at Edinburgh. Poor fellow! I believe he is dead; he took early to drinking." With all the sweetness of his character,

Scott had a good deal of wilfulness, which was shown in his studies. Though he mastered Latin fairly, he steadily declined to learn Greek.

As might be supposed, Scott was a Tory in politics, had a great reverence for the past, and was largely influenced by all that appealed to the imagination. He says in the autobiographical sketch before alluded to, "I, with my head on fire for chivalry, was a Cavalier; my friend was a Roundhead. I was a Tory, and he was a Whig; I hated Presbyterians, and admired Montrose with his victorious Highlanders; he liked the Presbyterian Ulysses, the deep and politic Argyle; so that we never wanted subjects of dispute; but our disputes were always amicable." And he adds with great candour: "In all these tenets there was no real conviction on my part arising out of the views or principles of either party. . . . I took up politics at that period as King Charles II. did his religion, from an idea that the Cavalier creed was the more gentleman-like persuasion of the two."

In course of time Scott entered college, and began his legal education, first as apprentice to his father, and then in the law classes of the University, where, amidst other studies less congenial to his mind, he learnt Italian, and became so enamoured of that melodious language as to maintain in an essay, much to the indignation of the Greek professor, the superiority of Ariosto to Homer, "supporting his heresy," to use his own words,

“by a profusion of bad readings and flimsy arguments.” Later on, and during his apprenticeship, he learned Spanish, and eagerly read Cervantes, whose novels, he said, first inspired him with the ambition to excel in fiction; and so gigantic was his memory, that all he read and admired he remembered. Such a value did Scott set on the acquisition of foreign languages, that he varied his legal studies by attending a German class, which some letters of Mackenzie, the author of “The Man of Feeling,” had made popular in Edinburgh; and his earliest attempt at verse was a poetical version of Bürger’s “Lenore,” which he got printed in a single night to gratify a lady who was a friend of the fair one whose favour he was seeking at the time, though unsuccessfully, to win.

Scott continued to practise at the Bar for fourteen years, never making more in any one year than £230; and his practice, instead of increasing, diminished, his well-known love for literature and his reputation for unprofessional adventure telling much against his success. In his eighth year at the Bar he was appointed Sheriff of Selkirkshire, with a salary of £300 a year, and as this occurred soon after his marriage to a lady of some means, his professional zeal became somewhat cooled. Before this latter event it was verified in his case, as in that of many others, that the “course of true love never did run smooth.” One Sunday, as the congregation were leaving Greyfriars’ Churchyard and the rain began

to fall, Scott offered his umbrella to a young lady of great personal charms, and the tender being accepted, he accompanied her home. Scott lost his heart to the fair stranger, who turned out to be Margaret, daughter of Sir John and Lady Jane Stuart Belches, of Invernay; and their return from church together, his mother forming one of the party, grew into something like a custom. Mrs. Scott and Lady Jane had been friends in youth, though they had scarcely seen each other for years, and they now renewed their former acquaintance. Scott's father, aware that the young lady had prospects of fortune far above his son's, thought it his duty to warn the baronet of Walter's views, and Sir John thanked him for his scrupulous attention, adding that "he believed he was mistaken," and he treated the whole business with great unconcern. The paternal interference produced no change in Scott's relations with the object of his growing attachment; and for years he nourished the dream of an ultimate union with the lady of his first and most passionate love; but all his hopes ended in her marriage to a gentleman of the highest character, who lived to act the part of a most generous friend to Scott throughout the anxieties and distresses of the closing period of his life. This was William Forbes, afterwards Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo, a banker, to whom some affectionate allusions occur in one of the greatest of his works. The full story of this early passion,

and the causes that led to the non-fulfilment of his hopes, will never be known. Whether Scott was mistaken as to the impression he had made on the lady, or whether she was mistaken in her own feelings regarding him; whether her father at last awoke to the truth that there was danger in their intimacy, are points in which we can reach no certainty; all that can be said is that this attachment had a powerful influence in keeping him from some of the most dangerous temptations that beset the young, and in nerving him for the sedulous diligence with which he pursued his legal studies during the two or three years that preceded his call to the Bar. That his sensitive nature would feel keenly the bitter ending to his youthful romance we can well believe; and, indeed, there is an entry in his diary respecting a visit, after many years, to the aged mother of his first love, which assures us that the events of the past were remembered with pain. It was in 1797, after his happy dream was rudely broken, that he wrote the beautiful lines "To a Violet," which betray the shock to his pride, and the bitterness of heart that resulted from his disappointment:

- "The violet in her greenwood bower,
Where birchen boughs with hazels mingle,
May boast itself the fairest flower
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.
- "Though fair her gems of azure hue,
Beneath the dewdrop's weight reclining,
I've seen an eye of lovelier blue,
More sweet through watery lustre shining.

“The summer sun that dew shall dry,
Ere yet the day be past its morrow ;
Nor longer in my false love's eye
Remain'd the tear of parting sorrow.”

It was in this year, 1797, and at the suggestion of his friend, Charles Kerr, who had been residing a good deal in Cumberland, and was enchanted with the beauty of the scenery, that Scott, accompanied by his brother John and Adam Fergusson, set out on a tour to the English lakes. Proceeding southwards, and after visiting many a beautiful spot, they at length fixed their headquarters at the then peaceful and sequestered little watering-place of Gilsland, and here it was that he first saw the amiable lady who was to make him a good wife, though by no means the ideal one for a man of his depth and intensity of character. This was Charlotte Margaret Carpenter, the daughter of Jean Charpentier, of Lyons, a devoted Royalist, who had died in the beginning of the Revolution. Madame Charpentier made her escape with her children, and came to England, where they had a warm friend and protector in the Marquis of Downshire. Miss Carpenter had many personal attractions: “a form that was fashioned as light as a fay's;” a complexion of the clearest and lightest olive; eyes large, deep-set, and dazzling, of the finest Italian brown, and a profusion of silken tresses, black as the raven's wing. “A lovelier vision,” says Lockhart, “as all who remember her in the bloom of her days have assured me, could hardly have been imagined;

and from that hour the fate of the young poet was fixed." Scott's conscientious regard for truth did not permit him to conceal what he might in the circumstances have been pardoned for withholding, viz., that he had recently been so deeply in love with another as to be heart-broken. We have, however, his own confession, made in December, 1825, that his heart had been "handsomely pieced" again by this happy marriage, "though the crack would remain till his dying day." The union on the whole was a happy one, for Miss Carpenter had a kindly nature and a true heart, though she was not able to enter into Scott's deeper anxieties, or to participate in his dreams. Scott carried his bride to a lodging in George Street, Edinburgh, a house which he had taken in South Castle Street not being quite prepared for her reception.

In the summer of 1798 Scott hired a pretty cottage at Lasswade, on the Esk, about six miles from Edinburgh, and it was here, a beautiful retreat, where he spent some happy summers, and amidst some of the most romantic scenery of Scotland, that he produced the pieces which laid the imperishable foundation of all his fame.

His earliest attempt at poetry was a vigorous version of Bürger's "Lenore," published under the title of "William and Helen," a spectre-ballad of great power, appealing to the emotions of pity and terror. The whole poem has a vividness calculated to touch the imagination; and

the translation has been much commended for the fine effect attained by the repetition of certain words. For instance :

“ And hurry, hurry ! clash, clash, clash !
The wasted form descends,
And fleet as wind through hazel bush
The wild career attends.

“ Tramp, tramp ! along the land they rode ;
Splash, splash ! along the sea ;
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,
The plashing pebbles flee.”

William Erskine had showed Lewis, whose clever but indecent romance of “ The Monk,” with the ballads it included, had procured for him in days barren of much literary merit a brilliant reputation, the version of “ Lenore ” and “ The Wild Huntsman,” and further added that his friend had other specimens of German *diablerie* in his portfolio. Lewis, who was then busy with that Miscellany which at length came out, in 1801, under the name of “ Tales of Wonder,” and was anxiously looking out for contributions, requested that Scott might be enlisted in the cause. Scott, an aspirant for fame, and dazzled by the popularity of Lewis, placed whatever pieces he had translated, or imitated from the German “ Volkslieder,” at his disposal.

But “ Tales of Wonder ” did not entirely engross Scott’s leisure at this time. His genius turned to more natural subjects, and to themes better calculated to arrest the feelings of his countrymen than any weird stories derived from

German *diablerie*. And so he produced what he justly calls his "first serious attempts in verse," and collected materials for a book afterwards to be published, called "Contributions to Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border." This was given to the world in 1802, and contains the poems of "Thomas the Rhymer," "Glenfinlas; or, Lord Ronald's Coronach," "The Eve of St. John," "Cadyow Castle," and "The Gray Brother."

The first of these is a poem on Thomas of Ercildoune, known as "The Rhymer," who united in his person the powers of both prophet and poet. Carried off at an early age to the fairy-land where he acquired the knowledge which made him so famous, he came back to earth to astonish his countrymen by his prophetic powers, but remained bound to return to his royal mistress when she should intimate her pleasure. On a certain occasion he was making merry with his friends in the tower of Ercildoune, when one came running and told, with marks of fear and astonishment, that a hart and hind had left the neighbouring forest, and were parading the street of the village. He immediately rose and left the tower, and followed the mysterious animals to the forest, whence he never returned.

"Glenfinlas; or, Lord Ronald's Coronach," is the legend of two Highland hunters who were passing the night in a solitary bothy or hut, built for hunting purposes, and were making merry over their venison and whisky. One of them

expressed a wish that they had pretty lasses to complete their party, and the words were scarcely uttered, when two beautiful young women, clad in green, entered the hut singing and dancing. One of the hunters was tempted by the siren who attached herself to him particularly to leave the bothy. The other remained, and, suspicious of the fair woman, continued to play, on a Jew's harp, some strain consecrated to the Virgin Mary. At the dawn of day the temptress vanished. Searching in the forest, the wiser hunter found the bones of his unfortunate friend, who had been torn to pieces and devoured by the fiend into whose toils he had fallen. The place was from this called the "Glen of the Green Woman."

"In 'The Eve of St. John' Scott repeoples," as Lockhart says, "the tower of Smailholme, the awe-inspiring haunt of his infancy; it is a weird and ghostly vision of guilt and its terrible retribution."

"The Gray Brother" is founded on the belief that the holiest service of the altar cannot proceed if an unclean person, a notorious sinner, unconfessed and unabsolved, be present. The ballad is only a fragment, but not the less impressive from its imperfect state, and in construction and metre is one of its author's happiest efforts in this style.

"Cadyow Castle" was composed in 1802, when Scott was thirty-one years of age; and in the same year he wrote the first canto of his first great romance in verse, "The Lay of the Last

Minstrel," a poem which was not published till 1805, when he was thirty-four. The "Lay" was suggested by the young and lovely Countess of Dalkeith, who requested that he would write a poem on the legend of the goblin page, Gilpin Horner; and the first canto was written in the lodgings to which he was confined for a fortnight in 1802 by a kick received from a horse on Portobello Sands, during a charge of the volunteer cavalry, in which Scott was cornet. The poem was originally intended to form part of the third volume of the "Minstrelsy," but it soon outgrew the limits which he had originally contemplated, and the design was abandoned. Scott soon perceived that the story of the goblin was confused and uninteresting, and, as he confessed to Miss Seward, he was compelled to extricate himself from the original groundwork of the tale in the best way he could. "The story appeared so uncouth that I was fain to put it into the mouth of my old minstrel, lest the nature of it should be misunderstood, and I should be suspected of setting up a new school of poetry, instead of a feeble attempt to imitate the old. In the process of the romance the page, intended to be a principal person in the work, contrived (from the baseness of his natural propensities, I suppose) to slink downstairs into the kitchen, and now he must e'en abide there." In Lockhart's opinion, "a single scene of feudal festivity, in the hall of Branksome, disturbed by some pranks of a non-

descript goblin," was possibly all that he had originally designed, till suddenly there flashed on him the idea of extending his simple outline so as to embrace a vivid panorama of that old Border life of war and tumult, and all earnest passions, with which his researches on the minstrelsy had by degrees fed his imagination." If this opinion be correct, the change of plan was most happy, and led to the immediate success of the poem. The Duchess of the "Lay" was, without doubt, intended to represent the Countess at whose request he wrote it; and the aged harper was the poet himself, who, under this disguise, poured out his loyalty and devotion to Lord and Lady Dalkeith.

Though Francis Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*, which had been lately started, denounced the defective conception of the fable, "the great inequality in the execution," and especially condemned, with extreme severity, "the undignified and improbable picture of the goblin page, an awkward sort of mongrel between Puck and Caliban," yet the poem called forth universal admiration, receiving even a warmer welcome on the south than on the north of the Tweed. The magnificent quarto edition of 750 copies was soon exhausted; and an octavo edition of 1,500 copies was sold out within the year. Two editions, consisting together of 4,250 copies, were disposed of in the following year; and before twenty-five years had elapsed—that is, before 1830—44,000 copies

had been bought by the public. Scott gained in all by the "Lay" £769, an unprecedented sum in those times for an author to obtain from any poem. Wordsworth and Campbell, his distinguished contemporaries, were prompt and cordial in their recognition of its excellence; and the great political rivals, Pitt and Fox, vied with each other in its praise. The lines in which Scott describes the trembling embarrassment of the aged minstrel as he tuned his harp before the Duchess produced on Pitt, according to his own account, "an effect which I might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given in poetry."

The lines to which the great Minister refers are these :

"The humble boon was soon obtain'd ;
The aged minstrel audience gain'd.
But when he reach'd the room of state,
Where she with all her ladies sate,
Perchance he wished his boon denied ;
For when to tune the harp he tried,
His trembling hand had lost the ease
Which marks security to please ;
And scenes long past, of joy and pain,
Came wildering o'er his aged brain,—
He tried to tune his harp in vain !
* * * * *
Here paused the harp ; and with its swell
The master's fire and courage fell ;
Dejectedly and low he bowed,
And gazing timid on the crowd,
He seem'd to seek in every eye
If they approved his minstrelsy ;
And diffident of present praise,
Somewhat he spoke of former days,
And how old age, and wandering long,
Had done his hand and harp some wrong."

There is great tenderness and beauty in this passage, as well as strength, simplicity, and spirit, and the aged harper is brought vividly before the imagination as he strives to recall the emotions of the past, at first doubtful, distrustful; and then, when they revive, "the lightening up of his faded eye," the triumph of a fulfilled desire; and at last the oblivion of the present, his toils, his wants, till, as he sweeps the sounding chords—

"Cold diffidence and age's frost,
In the full tide of song are lost."

Shortly after the publication of the "Lay," he formally, though secretly, joined Ballantyne as a partner in the printing business. He embarked in the concern almost the whole of the capital at his disposal—nearly the £5,000 which he had received for Rosebank, and which he had, a few months before, designed to invest in the purchase of Broad meadows. He explains his motives for this step—so far, at least, as he then recalled them—in a letter written after his misfortunes in 1826. "It is easy," he said, "no doubt, for any friend to blame me for entering into connection with commercial matters at all. But I wish to know what I could have done better—excluded from the Bar, and then from all profits for six years, by my colleague's prolonged life. Literature was not in those days what poor Constable has made it; and with my little capital I was too glad to make, commercially, the means of supporting my family. I got but £600 for 'The Lay of

the Last Minstrel,' and—it was a price which made men's hair stand on end—£1,000 for 'Marmion.' I have been far from suffering by James Ballantyne. I owe it to him to say that his difficulties, as well as his advantages, are owing to me."

Scott ceased to practise at the Bar, no doubt in great measure because his pride was hurt at his want of success; and having a horror of resting on literature alone as his main resource, he hoped that if he could but use his literary instinct to feed some commercial undertaking, managed by a man he could trust, he might obtain, at least, a share in those more liberal rewards which commercial men managed to gain for themselves out of successful authors. Nor would this oblige him either to give up his status as a sheriff, or his official duties as a clerk of session, or his literary undertakings. "The forming of this commercial connection," says Lockhart, "was one of the most important steps in Scott's life. He continued bound by it during twenty years, and its influence on his literary exertions and his worldly fortunes was productive of much good, and not a little evil. Its effects were, in truth, so varied and balanced during the vicissitudes of a long and vigorous career, that I, at this moment, doubt whether it ought, on the whole, to be considered with more of satisfaction or of regret."

Scott had now several literary projects on

hand. "I have imagined," he says in a letter to Ballantyne, "a very superb work. What think you of a complete edition of British poets, ancient and modern? Johnson's is imperfect, and out of print; so is Bell's, which is a Liliputian thing; and Anderson's, the most complete in point of number, is most contemptible in execution both of the editor and printer. There is a scheme for you! At least a hundred volumes to be published, at the rate of ten a year." Scott opened his gigantic scheme to Constable, who entered into it with eagerness; but they found that some of the London publishers had a similar plan on foot, and were in treaty for the biographical prefaces. Scott proposed that the Edinburgh and London houses should join in the adventure, and that the editorial tasks should be shared between himself and his brother poet. To this the publishers and Campbell warmly assented; but the design fell to the ground in consequence of the booksellers refusing to admit certain works which both Scott and Campbell insisted upon.

Scott now began to work seriously on Dryden, and also prepared for the *Edinburgh Review* an article on Todd's edition of Spenser; another on Godwin's "Fleetwood"; and several others for the same periodical, among them the Highland Society's report concerning the poems of Ossian, and one on some cookery-books, which contained excellent specimens of his humour. About 1805 he wrote the opening chapters of "Waverley";

and the second title, "'Tis Sixty Years Since"—selected, as he says, that the actual date of publication might correspond with the period in which the scene was laid—leaves no doubt that he had begun the work so early in 1805 as to contemplate publishing it before Christmas.

"Marmion," Scott's greatest poem, was published on February 23, 1808, three years after the publication of the "Lay." The literary world was, at the time of its publication, divided on the merits of the "Lay" and the new poem; and it was Southey's opinion that "though the story of Marmion was made of better materials, yet they were not so well fitted together. As a whole," he says, "it has not pleased me so much—in parts it has pleased me more. There is nothing so finely conceived in your former poem as the death of Marmion; there is nothing finer in conception anywhere." Wordsworth, in writing to Scott, says: "In the circle of my acquaintance it seems as well liked as the 'Lay,' though I have heard that in the world it is not so. Had the poem been much better than the 'Lay,' it could scarcely have satisfied the public, which has too much of the monitor, the moral monitor, in its composition." Two months after the publication of "Marmion," Ellis writes to the author: "With respect to the two rivals, I think the 'Lay' is, on the whole, the greatest favourite"; and after giving some reasons for this, he adds: "Now all this may be very true;

but it is no less true that everybody has already read 'Marmion' *more than once*, that it is the subject of general conversation—that it delights all ages and all tastes—and that it is universally allowed to improve upon a second reading. My own opinion is that both the productions are equally good in their different ways. Yet, upon the whole, I had rather be the author of 'Marmion' than of the 'Lay,' because I think its species of excellence of much more difficult attainment."

There is no doubt that the verdict of succeeding time has been in favour of "Marmion," and that it takes a place in general estimation above Scott's other poems, ranking higher than "The Lady of the Lake," and therefore higher than "Rokeby," or "The Lord of the Isles," or "The Bridal of Triermain." Modern criticism, I think, does not give Scott that place among poets to which he is justly entitled. No doubt his genius was at its freest and richest in prose, and that here his creative power finds its greatest stimulus. He has not, as a poet, the strength or variety of Byron, the luscious imagery of Keats, the ethereal grace of Shelley, the insight into the deeper side of life and nature that belongs to Wordsworth, or the lyric beauty and sweetness of Tennyson. But he has an Homeric simplicity, a martial ardour, and a passionate sympathy with all that is noble and great, which gives him a high place among "the immortals." There is many an

exquisite description of Nature in his poems ; many a heart-stirring battle-scene, in which we hear the shouts of the foemen and the shock of arms, and see the charge of the archers, with the rapid onset, the hurry and clash of war, until we feel the joy of battle and the triumph of the victory. What a lovely bit of description we have in the introduction to the second canto of "Marmion" !—

"Oft in my mind such thoughts awake
By lone St. Mary's silent lake ;
Thou know'st it well,—nor fen, nor sedge,
Pollute the pure lake's crystal edge ;
Abrupt and sheer the mountains sink
At once upon the level's brink,
And just a trace of silver sand
Marks where the water meets the land.
Far in the mirror, bright and blue,
Each huge hill's outline you may view ;
Shaggy with heath, but lonely, bare,
Nor tree, nor bush, nor brake is there,
Save where, of land, yon slender line
Bears thwart the lake the scatter'd pine."

In a different style, how admirable is the Battle of Flodden in its high patriotic feeling, its stern and deep excitement, its force and swiftness, its picturesque detail, its martial spirit, and the light and glow thrown over the whole scene !—

"But as they left the dark'ning heath,
More desperate grew the strife of death :
The English shafts, in volleys hail'd,
In headlong charge their horse assailed ;
Front, flank, and rear, the squadrons sweep
To break the Scottish circle deep,
That fought around their king.
But yet, though thick the shafts as snow,
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,
Though bill-men ply the ghastly bow,
Unbroken was the ring.

The stubborn spearmen still made good
Their dark impenetrable wood,
Each stepping where his comrade stood
The instant that he fell.
No thought was there of dastard flight ;
Linked in the serried phalanx tight,
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,
As fearlessly and well ;
Till utter darkness closed her wing,
O'er their thin host and wounded king."

In his monograph on Scott in the "English Men of Letters," Mr. Hutton tells the following anecdote of the impression left on the mind, not of excitable youth, but of sober and serious age, by the closing scenes of *Marmion* : "I have heard of two old men, complete strangers, passing each other on a dark London night, when one of them happened to be repeating to himself the last lines of the account of Flodden Field in '*Marmion*'— 'Charge, Chester, charge!' when suddenly a reply came out of the darkness, 'On, Stanley, on!' whereupon they finished the death of *Marmion* between them, took off their hats to each other, and parted laughing."

Some lines in the magnificent ballad of "Cadyow Castle" made a strong impression on Thomas Campbell, the poet. He was found one night on the North Bridge at Edinburgh, wild with excitement, repeating these verses, which have all the ring of a trumpet :

"Through the huge oaks of Evandale,
Whose limbs a thousand years have worn,
What sullen roar comes down the gale,
And drowns the hunter's pealing horn ?

- “ Mightiest of all the beasts of chase
That roam in woody Caledon,
Crashing the forest in his race,
The mountain bull comes thundering on.
“ Fierce on the hunters’ quivered band,
He rolls his eyes of swarthy glow,
Spurns with black hoof and horn the sand,
And tosses high his mane of snow.
“ Aim’d well, the chieftain’s lance has flown ;
Struggling in blood the savage lies ;
His roar is sunk in hollow groan :
Sound, merry huntsmen ! sound the pryse !”

Referring to these verses, Campbell said : “ I have repeated them so often on the North Bridge that the whole fraternity of coachmen know me by my tongue as I pass. To be sure, to a mind in sober, serious, street-walking humour it must bear an appearance of lunacy when one stamps with the hurried pace and fervent shake of the head which strong, pithy poetry excites.”

“ The Lady of the Lake,” which depends for its chief interest on incident and romantic situation, but which is also full of light and colour, fiery ardour, and national feeling, was published in May, 1810. Scott’s reputation had so steadily increased that he sold the copyright for double the price that “ Marmion ” had produced. A lady, a cousin of his, who, when the work was in progress, used to ask him what he could possibly have to do so early in the morning, and to whom he at last told the subject of his meditations, tried to dissuade him from publishing a poem after “ Marmion,” fearing lest its popularity should stand in the way of another, however

good. "He stood high," she said, "and should not rashly attempt to climb higher, and incur the risk of a fall; for he might depend upon it a favourite would not be permitted even to stumble with impunity." But he replied, in the words of Montrose :

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all."

As the last sheets are passing through the press he writes to Morritt : "If I fail, as Lady Macbeth gallantly says, I fail, and there is only a story murdered to no purpose; and if I succeed, why, then, as the song says :

"Up with the bonnie blue bonnet,
The dirk and feather and a'."

Success was not for a moment doubtful. "The Lady of the Lake" appeared in all the majesty of quarto, with every accompanying grace of typography, enhanced in value, moreover, by an engraved frontispiece of Saxon's portrait of Scott; the price of the book, two guineas. This edition of 2,050 copies disappeared instantly, and was followed, in the course of the same year, by four editions in octavo, namely, one of 3,000, a second of 3,250, and a third and a fourth, each of 6,000 copies; thus, in the space of a few months, the extraordinary number of 20,000 copies were disposed of.

The interest which the poem excited in Edinburgh, for two or three months before it was

published, was unprecedented. A great poem was on all hands anticipated. None of the author's works were looked for with more intense anxiety, nor did any of them, when it appeared, excite a more extraordinary sensation. The whole country rang with the praises of the poet. Crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine—till then comparatively unknown; and as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighbourhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors. From the date of the publication of this poem the post-horse duty in Scotland rose to an extraordinary degree; and, indeed, it continued to do so regularly for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for the scenery which he had thus originally created. Jeffrey preferred the new poem to either of its predecessors. "The diction," he says, "is more polished"; indeed, he compared it at times to "the careless richness of Shakespeare":

"The versification is more regular, the story is constructed with infinitely more skill and address; there is a larger variety of characters more artfully and judiciously contrasted. There is nothing, perhaps, so fine as the battle in 'Marmion,' or so picturesque as some of the scattered sketches of 'The Lay'; but there is a richness and spirit in the whole piece which does not pervade either of those poems; a profusion of incident, and a shifting brilliancy of colouring that reminds one of the witchery of Ariosto; and a constant elasticity and occasional energy which seems to belong more peculiarly to the author."

This is a candid and discriminating judgment, but I think the verdict of the general public is

different, and that, both in regard to the painting of Nature and the description of war, as well as in its passionate excitement and poetical power, "Marmion" carries off the palm. Nevertheless, there is marvellous vigour in some of the battle episodes in "The Lady of the Lake," and two or three brilliant passages in the description of battle carry us completely away. Soldiers in the field have felt their power. We read, in Lockhart's "Life of Scott," that, "in the course of the day, when 'The Lady of the Lake' first reached Sir Adam Fergusson, he was posted with his company on a point of ground exposed to the enemy's artillery, somewhere, no doubt, on the lines of Torres Vedras. The men were ordered to lie prostrate on the ground; while they kept that attitude, the Captain, kneeling at their head, read aloud the description of the battle in Canto vi., and the listening soldiers only interrupted him by a joyous huzza when the French shot struck the bank close above them." We can imagine how such a passage as the following would thrill the hearts of the Scotch soldiers as they lay on the ground to shelter themselves from the French guns :

" Their light-armed archers far and near
Surveyed the tangled ground,
Their centre ranks with pike and spear
A twilight forest frowned,
Their barbèd horsemen, in the rear,
The stern battalia crowned.
No cymbal clashed, no clarion rang,
Still were the pipe and drum ;
Save heavy tread, and armour's clang,
The sullen march was dumb.

There breathed no wind their crests to shake,
Or wave their flags abroad ;
Scarce the frail aspen seemed to quake,
That shadowed o'er their road.
Their vaward scouts no tidings bring,
Can rouse no lurking foe,
Nor spy a trace of living thing,
Save when they stirred the roe ;
The host moves like a deep sea-wave,
Where rise no rocks its pride to brave,
High-swellng, dark, and slow.
The lake is passed, and now they gain
A narrow and a broken plain,
Before the Trosachs' rugged jaws ;
And here the horse and spear men pause,
While, to explore the dangerous glen,
Dive through the pass the archer-men.
At once there rose so wild a yell
Within that dark and narrow dell,
As all the fiends from heaven that fell,
Had pealed the banner-cry of hell !
Forth from the pass in tumult driven,
Like chaff before the winds of heaven,
The archery appear ;
For life ! for life ! their flight they ply—
And shriek, and shout, and battle-cry,
And plaids and bonnets waving high,
And broadswords flashing to the sky,
Are maddening in their rear.
Onward they drive in dreadful race,
Pursuers and pursued ;
Before that tide of flight and chase,
How shall it keep its rooted place,
The spearmen's twilight wood ?
'Down, down,' cried Mar, 'your lances down !
Bear back both friend and foe !'
Like reeds before the tempest's frown,
That serried grove of lances brown
At once lay levelled low ;
And closely shouldering side to side,
The bristling ranks the onset bide,—
'We'll quell the savage mountaineer,
As their Tinchel cows the game !
They come as fleet as forest deer,
We'll drive them back as tame.' "

Scott had begun "Waverley" in 1805, and then laid it aside and resumed it in 1810, but still left it unfinished. In 1811 he published "The Vision of Don Roderick"; and in the original preface to this poem he alludes to two events which had cruelly interrupted his task: the successive deaths of his kind friend, the Lord President of the Court of Session (Blair), and his early patron, Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville. The immediate proceeds of the poem were forwarded to the board in London, formed for the purpose of affording relief to the Portuguese who had suffered from the war in the Peninsula. Scott says, in a letter to Mr. Morritt, who had lost a dear young friend in the battle of Barrosa:

"Silver and gold have I none, but that which I have I will give unto thee. My lyrics are called 'The Vision of Don Roderick'; you remember the story of the last Gothic King of Spain descending into an enchanted cavern to know the fate of the Moorish invasion—that is my machinery. Pray do not mention this, for someone will snatch up the subject, as I have been served before; and I have not written a line yet. I am going to Ashestiel for eight days to fish and rhyme."

The poem was received with favour, and called forth letters of admiration from Canning, Sir Adam Fergusson, and Lady Wellington; but though it contains some fine stanzas, yet we must admit the justice of the criticism, that it is "an unsuccessful attempt to blend the past history of Spain with the interests of the Peninsular war."

The year 1812 was an eventful one in Scott's life. As the death of Mr. Horne had placed him

in the enjoyment of the clerkship of Session, his income was now £2,000 a year, independently of any profits from his literary labours. He felt, therefore, he could indulge a desire, long entertained, of possessing a house of his own. His lease of Ashestiel was about to expire, and he resolved to purchase a piece of ground sufficient for a cottage and a few fields. These stretched along the Tweed, near half-way between Melrose and Selkirk; and the whole farm, of one hundred acres in extent, once belonged to the great Abbey of Melrose, of which it commanded a fine view. Its name was Abbotsford. The farmhouse was small and in bad condition, but it was situated on land connected with many romantic associations, and the site was one of great natural picturesqueness and beauty; while the Tweed, which he loved, flowed broad and bright through undulating grounds, and was overhung by the alder and the birch. The price was moderate, about £4,000; and, as Lockhart says, "his prophetic eye already beheld rich pastures, embowered among flourishing groves, where his children's children should thank the founder." At first his idea did not go beyond a cottage with two spare bedrooms, with dressing-rooms, each of which on a pinch would have a couch-bed; and as he eagerly pressed the work on, it was sufficiently completed to allow of his removal to it in the summer of 1812. He and Mrs. Scott "were not a little proud," as he writes to his brother-in-law,

Mr. Carpenter, "of being greeted as the Laird and Lady of Abbotsford"; and he celebrated his occupation of his new abode by a grand gala to all the Scotts in the county, from the duke to the peasant, who were to dance on the green to the sound of the bagpipes and drink whisky-punch. "We are very clannish in this corner."

Of the £4,000 which Scott paid for the original farm of Abbotsford, he borrowed one-half from his eldest brother, Major John Scott; the other moiety was raised by the Ballantynes, and advanced on the security of the as yet unwritten, though long-meditated, poem of "Rokeby." He had requested Mr. Stark, of Edinburgh, an architect of some talent, to give him a design for an ornamental cottage in the style of the Old-English vicarage-house, but before this could be done Mr. Stark died. Checked for a season by this occurrence, Scott's plans gradually expanded; and twelve years afterwards the site was occupied, not by a cottage, but a castle.

Scott was now engaged upon two poems, of which the longer, "Rokeby," appeared first, being published at the beginning of the year 1813. The scene is laid near Greta Bridge, in Yorkshire, the seat of his friend Morritt. Scott, when on a visit to his friend, had been struck with the extreme loveliness of the place—its romantic variety of glen, torrent, and copse, and the flow of two beautiful rivers, the Greta and the Tees, which unite their streams in the wooded demesne. He

made it the scene of a poem whose action was laid in the civil war of Charles I. The whole edition of 3,250 copies was sold off within a week, but the demand was sooner satisfied than that for his earlier poems ; and though Lockhart is warm in his praise of many incidents and passages, he is "compelled to confess that it has never been so much a favourite with the public at large as any other of his poetical romances." Scott's own description of it to Mr. Ellis was that of a pseudo-romance of pseudo-chivalry. He had converted a lusty buccaneer into a hero with some effect, but the worst of all his undertakings was that his rogue, always in spite of him, turned out his hero. But, in defiance of this perversion or conversion, he hoped the thing would do, chiefly because the world would not expect from him a poem of which the interest turned upon *character*. "If it was fair for him to say anything of his own poems, he would say that the force in the 'Lay' is thrown on style ; in 'Marmion' on description ; and in 'The Lady of the Lake' on incident."

There is no doubt that "Rokeby" shows exhaustion, and though Morritt assured Scott that he considered it the best of all his poems—his judgment being probably biased, as he was lord of the beautiful demesne where the scene is laid—yet Moore ventured to raise a good-humoured laugh at it, as the poem owed its existence to being the abode of a friend, hinting that if Scott had any friends equally valued in the more

southern counties, their seats might come to be celebrated in the same manner. "Mr. Scott," he wrote,

"Having quitted the Borders to seek new renown,
Is coming by long quarto stages to town ;
And beginning with Rokeby (the jade's sure to pay),
Means to do all the gentlemen's seats by the way."

Nevertheless the poem contains some graceful and spirited songs. Here is one :

" 'A weary lot is thine, fair maid,
A weary lot is thine !
To pull the thorn thy brow to braid,
And press the rue for wine !
A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
A feather of the blue,
A doublet of the Lincoln green,—
No more of me you knew,
My love !
No more of me you knew."

" 'This morn is merry June, I trow,
The rose is budding fain ;
But she shall bloom in winter snow,
Ere we two meet again.'
He turned his charger as he spake,
Upon the river shore,
He gave his bridle-reins a shake,
Said, 'Adieu for evermore,
My love !
And adieu for evermore.'"

Here is another, "The Cavalier" :

"While the dawn on the mountain was misty and gray,
My True Love has mounted his steed and away,
Over hill, over valley, o'er dale, and o'er down ;
Heaven shield the brave gallant that fights for the Crown.

"He has doffed the silk doublet the breastplate to bear,
He has placed the steel-cap o'er his long flowing hair,
From his belt to his stirrup his broadsword hangs down—
Heaven shield the brave gallant that fights for the Crown.

- “For the rights of fair England that broadsword he draws ;
Her King is his leader, her Church is his cause ;
His watchword is honour, his pay is renown —
GOD strike with the gallant that strikes for the Crown.
- “They may boast of their Fairfax, their Waller, and all
The round-headed rebels of Westminster Hall ;
But tell these bold traitors of London’s proud town
That the spears of the North have encircled the Crown.
- “There’s Derby and Cavendish, dread of their foes ;
There’s Erin’s high Ormond, and Scotland’s Montrose !
Would you match the base Skippon, and Massey, and
Brown,
With the Barons of England, that fight for the Crown !
- “Now joy to the crest of the brave Cavalier !
Be his banner unconquered, resistless his spear,
Till in peace and in triumph his toils he may drown
In a pledge to fair England, her Church, and her Crown !”

Scott’s other poem, “The Bridal of Triermain,” was published anonymously early in the year 1813, and in the hope that even his most intimate friends would not discover the author. “He had even,” as he afterwards said, “tried to mix something that might resemble (as far as was in his power) the feeling and manner of a friend who was more than suspected of a taste for poetry, Mr. Erskine.” Lockhart thinks it next to impossible that many should have been deceived ; but the Reviewer in the *Quarterly* was taken in—though it was probably Scott’s own intimate friend—Mr. Ellis. The Reviewer spoke of the poem as “an imitation of Scott’s style ; one which, if inferior in vigour to some of his productions, equals or surpasses them in elegance and beauty, and is more uniformly tender.” The diction “reminds him of a rhythm and cadence

he had heard before ; but the sentiments, descriptions and character have qualities that are native and unborrowed." The subject was taken from the Arthurian legends, though the particular episode in his history was due to the poet's own invention, and the scene was laid in the lovely vale of St. John. This valley had an especial charm for Scott, for it was at a ball in the neighbourhood that he first met his wife, and in the vision of Lyulph he describes the most striking features in a district of the English Lake Country, which is "beautiful exceedingly." Those who have visited the valley of St. John on their way from Keswick to Grasmere, know well the black rocks and the roaring stream, the lofty hills and the narrow dale, the mound that rises with airy turrets crowned, which in the dim twilight, or when the mists and clouds gather round its head, seems like a castle's massive walls. But here is the passage itself :

"He rode, till over down and dell
The shade more broad and deeper fell,
And though around the mountain's head
Flowed streams of purple, gold, and red,
Dark at the base, unblessed by beam,
Frowned the black rocks, and roared the stream.
With toil the king his way pursued
By lonely Threlkeld's waste and wood,
Till on his course obliquely shone
The narrow valley of Saint John,
Down sloping to the western sky,
Where lingering sunbeams love to lie.
Right glad to feel those beams again,
The king drew up his charger's rein ;
With gauntlet raised he screened his sight,
As dazzled with the level light,

And, from beneath his glove of mail,
Scanned at his ease the lovely vale,
While 'gainst the sun his armour bright
Gleamed ruddy like the beacon's light.

"Paled in by many a lofty hill,
The narrow dale lay smooth and still,
And, down its verdant bosom led,
A winding brooklet found its bed.
But midmost of the vale, a mound
Arose, with airy turrets crowned,
Buttress, and rampire's circling bound,
And mighty keep and tower ;
Seemed some primeval giant's hand
The castle's massive walls had planned,
A pond'rous bulwark, to withstand
Ambitious Nimrod's power.
Above the moated entrance slung,
The balanced drawbridge trembling hung,
As jealous of a foe ;
Wicket of oak, as iron hard,
With iron studded, clenched, and barred,
And pronged portcullis, joined to guard
The gloomy pass below.
But the gray walls no banners crowned,
Upon the watch-tower's airy round
No warder stood his horn to sound,
No guard beside the bridge was found,
And, where the Gothic gateway frowned,
Glanced neither bill nor bow."

Once more, and for the last time, did Scott court the judgment of the public with a poem ; but before he did so, he had broken new ground as a novelist, and the reception which "Waverley" received induced him for the future to devote himself to prose as a vehicle for fiction.

Before proceeding to speak of his novels, I shall conclude what I have to say of his poems. Not long after the publication of "The Bridal of Triermain," he had the flattering offer from the Prince Regent, of his own free motion, to make

him Poet Laureate ; but though finding a difficulty in declining an honour which was meant both as a compliment and a service, yet his own judgment induced him to do so, and his friends approved of his determination. He feared that "if he accepted the post he should be well quizzed," and dreaded lest, favoured as he had been by the public, he might be considered, with some justice, as engrossing a petty emolument which might do real service to some poorer brother of the Muses. He was the more satisfied with his decision when, through his influence, the offer was made to Southey, the man nearest himself in literary reputation, and whose circumstances did not make him equally indifferent to an increase of income.

The scenery of the Western Isles had impressed his fancy as full of poetical suggestion on a visit to the Laird of Staffa, and he resolved to place the action of the "Lord of the Isles" amidst the mountains and mists, the lakes and islands of Skye and Arran. It was published in January, 1815. Both the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly* spoke in warm praise of its glow of colouring, its energy of narration, and its amplitude of description. "Mr. Scott," says the *Quarterly*, "infuses into his narrative such a flow of life and, if we may so express ourselves, of animal spirits, that without satisfying the judgment, or moving the feelings, or elevating the mind, or even very greatly interesting the curiosity,

he is able to seize upon, and, as it were, exhilarate the imagination of his readers, in a manner which is often truly unaccountable." Each reviewer tempered his praises with a suggestion of defects both in the language and in the composition of the story, and complained that the poet neglected to bestow on his work "that common degree of labour and meditation which it is scarcely decorous to withhold." The poem contains, however, many fine passages, and the character of Robert the Bruce, who is its real hero, is delineated with surpassing power, while the picture of Bannockburn is hardly inferior to the description of Flodden Field in "Marmion." The heroines, too, are painted with the utmost delicacy, and their difference of character is indicated by exquisite and beautiful touches.

The first edition of 1,800 copies in quarto was rapidly disposed of, but the demand was not sustained as had been that of the former poems, and the falling off was decided; and Scott, who was wholly unprepared for this result, felt keenly the disappointment. There is no doubt that this decline in his popularity as a poet was owing in a great measure to the rising of a new and brilliant star in the poetical horizon, and that Byron, who was now throwing off his Eastern tales with unexampled rapidity, was supplanting Scott in public favour. In the "Giaour," the "Corsair," the "Bride of Abydos," and "Parisina," in "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan," Byron, by the in-

tensity of his passion, the richness of his imagination, his mastery over language, the freshness and force of his genius, took all hearts by storm, and, for the time being, rendered all competition hopeless. Scott felt that he was overshadowed by the splendour of Byron, and, only expressing a wonder that his poetical popularity should have lasted so long, determined to confine himself to the writing of novels.

In his last poem, "The Lord of the Isles," there is the same feeling for colour, the same glow as in his other poems; the same passionate love of the beautiful and picturesque; the same rush and force in the battle scene, and the same life thrown into Nature, though he never lends her a soul as does Wordsworth, so notably in that magnificent poem "Tintern Abbey." There is a graphic piece of word-painting in the following description of Lake Corriskin :

" ' This lake,' said Bruce, ' whose barriers drear
Are precipices sharp and sheer,
Yielding no track for goat or deer,
Save the black shelves we tread,
How term you its dark waves ? and how
Yon northern mountain's pathless brow,
And yonder peak of dread,
That to the evening sun uplifts
The griesly gulphs and slaty rifts,
Which seam its shivered head ?'—
' Corriskin call the dark lake's name,
Coolin the ridge, as bards proclaim,
From old Cuchullin, chief of fame.
But bards, familiar in our isles
Rather with Nature's frowns than smiles,
Full oft their careless humours please
By sportive names for scenes like these.

I would old Torquil were to show
His Maidens with their breasts of snow,
Or that my noble Liege were nigh
To hear his Nurse sing lullaby !
(The Maids—tall cliffs with breakers white,
The Nurse—a torrent's roaring might.)
Or that your eye could see the mood
Of Corrievreken's whirlpool rude,
When dons the Hag her whitened hood.'
Huge terraces of granite black
Afforded rude and cumbered track ;
 For from the mountain hoar,
Hurled headlong in some night of fear,
When yelled the wolf and fled the deer,
 Loose crags had toppled o'er ;
And some, chance poised and balanced, lay,
So that a stripling arm might sway
 A mass no host could raise,
In Nature's rage at random thrown,
Yet trembling like the Druid's stone
 On its precarious base.
The evening mists, with ceaseless change,
Now clothed the mountains' lofty range,
 Now left their foreheads bare,
And round the skirts their mantle furled,
Or on the sable waters curled,
Or, on the eddy breezes whirled,
 Dispersed in middle air,
And oft, condensed, at once they lower,
When, brief and fierce, the mountain shower
 Pours like a torrent down,
And when return the sun's glad beams,
Whitened with foam a thousand streams
 Leap from the mountain's crown."

Let us now turn to the immortal Waverley novels, in which Scott shone without a rival, and in which his genius is most fully displayed. "Waverley," the first of the brilliant series, appeared on July 7, 1814, and was published anonymously, being left to win its way in the world without any of the usual recommendations.

Begun in 1805, it had been laid aside, and was now finished in a time incredibly short, the last two volumes having been written in three weeks. It had a success unprecedented in the case of an anonymous novel, and put forth at what is known among publishers as "the dead season." The whole impression of 1,000 copies disappeared within a few weeks, and edition after edition was rapidly called for. Scott's aim as a novelist was to attempt for his own country something of the same kind as that which Miss Edgeworth had so fortunately achieved for Ireland—something which might introduce her natives to those of the sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had hitherto been placed, and might "tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles." Till near the close of his career as an author, Scott clung to his incognito; one reason for secrecy being lest a comparative failure, or even a moderate success in fiction, should endanger the great reputation he had gained as a poet. Another reason may have been that it stimulated his imagination, and gratified the boyish pleasure which he had in wearing a mask to the outside world. As Morritt, however, foretold, his disguise was penetrated by some of his friends, and the Reviewer in the *Edinburgh* closed his notice of the book with the suggestion that "if it were indeed the work of an author hitherto unknown, Mr. Scott would do well to look to his laurels." The disguise Scott

persisted in maintaining, even after it had been seen through ; and it was not till after the ruin of Ballantyne's affairs that novel after novel was issued with any other description of the writer than as "The Author of 'Waverley.' " There is an anecdote told of Scott when, in the height of his fame, he paid a visit to London in the year 1815. The Prince Regent, wishing to do him honour, asked him to dinner ; and as the authorship of "Waverley" was still unavowed, the Prince thought he could make a custom, usual in those days at dinner-tables, available to extract a confession of the truth. The Regent filled his glass, and called for a bumper, with all the honours, to "The Author of Waverley." Scott was not a man to be taken by surprise. He, too, filled his glass, and "since his Royal Highness looked as if he thought he had some claim to the honour of this toast," explained that he had no such pretensions, but promised to "take care that the real Simon Pure should hear of the high compliment that had been now paid him." But neither was the Regent to be baffled in his purpose. Once more he filled his glass, and demanded "another of the same to the author of 'Marmion' ; and now, Walter, my man," he added, "I have checkmated you for once!"—the checkmate being an allusion to an anecdote that had just before been told by Scott of a well-known Scotch judge. Other dinner-parties followed, and all of them flattering to the distinguished guest ; and as a

lasting memorial of his visit, the Prince gave him a golden snuff-box, set with diamonds, and further embellished with his own portrait on the lid.

Scott's power as a novelist is seen in the ease with which he takes you back to days long gone by, and paints them with a truth and freshness unsurpassed and unrivalled by any other writer but Shakespeare. It is not merely the life of his own time and country that he describes, but he transports us to the distant scenes of the past, and makes us live amid the political and religious controversies of those days, showing us how the men long dead were affected and influenced by the public strifes and social interests of their age. Not that he neglects the private passions of individuals, but these are not the all in all of the story, and are closely associated with the public life and the historical interests of the epoch in which the scene is laid. Not only does he paint the lights and shades of Scottish life and character, its richest humour and its purest pathos, but he portrays for us the ambitions of the great, the jealousy of nobles, the forethought of statesmen, the craft of kings, the policy of courtiers, the tenderness of women; and so great is his power that we "weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice." And what a variety of characters he has drawn for us in his novels! He paints with a life-like brush kings and queens, princes and peasants, statesmen and courtiers, lawyers and farmers, freebooters and preachers, gipsies and beggars.

Scott's heroes may sometimes be a little colourless, with not much of decision in their character, prone to reasoning when action is demanded; and hesitating when it would have been more natural to yield to their sympathies, or to be carried away by impulse. He confessed himself the weakness of his own heroes. "Edward Waverley," he said, was "a sneaking piece of imbecility"; and "if he had married Flora, she would have set him up upon the chimney-piece, as Count Borowlaski's wife used to do with him. I am a bad hand at depicting a hero, properly so called, and have an unfortunate propensity for the dubious characters of borderers, buccaneers, highland robbers, and all others of a Robin Hood description."

But Scott does himself scant justice; many of his men are living and informed with the very spirit of genius, Scott breathing his own life into the character. I cannot think that Carlyle judges him aright when he says that "these great types of his are drawn from the outside, and not made actually to live":

"His Baillie Jarvis, Dinmont, Dalgettys (for their name is legion) do look and talk like what they give themselves out for; they are, if not created and made poetically alive, yet deceptively enacted, as a good player might do them. What more is wanted, then? For the reader, lying on a sofa, nothing more; yet for another sort of reader, much. It were a long chapter to unfold the difference in drawing a character between a Scott, and a Shakespeare, and a Goethe. Yet it is a difference literally immense; they are of a different species; the value of the one is not to be counted in the coin of the other. We might say in a short word, which covers a long matter, that your Shakespeare fashions his

characters from the heart outwards; your Scott fashions them from the skin inwards, never getting near the heart of them. The one set become living men and women; the other amount to little more than mechanical cases, deceptively painted automatons."

But is it true of Scott that he "fashions his heroes from the skin inwards, never getting near the heart of them"? Can this be said of Balfour of Burley, or Dalgetty, of Rob Roy, of Richard the Lion-hearted, or Saladin? Can this criticism hold for one moment when you consider how powerfully he has drawn the great figures of Louis XI. and Charles the Bold, and how he paints for us the historical portraits of the Dukes of Argyle, and Claverhouse, and Monmouth, of Sussex and of Leicester; of Elizabeth Tudor and Mary Stuart? And what a gallery of fair women we have in the romances and novels! Lucy Ashton and Amy Robsart, Catherine Seyton, Di Vernon, Edith Bellenden and Alice Lee, Jeanie Deans and Madge Wildfire, Meg Merrilies and the fascinating Queen of Scotland! And all are drawn with such an exquisite touch that we know not which most to admire, the purity of the conception, or the delicacy of the execution. These women are all the direct intuitions of genius, and will live so long as the English language is spoken—will live beside Juliet, and Desdemona, and Imogen; beside Beatrice, and Portia, and Viola, and the other lovely pictures of pure womanhood for which we are indebted to Shakespeare. Many, too, are the scenes in the novels which are unsurpassed

for vividness and brilliancy, and which, taking us back to the times and events which they describe, impress us with their grandeur, or touch us by their force. They are certainly "painted from the heart outwards," and not "from the skin inwards." Instances of such scenes will occur to the reader when he recalls "Quentin Durward," "Ivanhoe," "The Talisman," "Old Mortality," "The Bride of Lammermoor," and others of the same interest, picturesqueness and beauty, whether dealing with Scotland or with other countries. As to descriptions of nature, I will give only one passage, in which, as Ruskin says in one of the numbers of his "*Præterita*," "he has contrasted with the utmost masterhood the impressions of English and Scotch landscapes." Few scenes of the world have been oftener described, with the utmost skill and sincerity of authors, than the view from Richmond Hill sixty years since; but none can be compared with the ten lines in "The Heart of Midlothian":

"A huge sea of verdure, with crossing and intersecting promontories of massive and tufted groves, was tenanted by numberless flocks and herds, which seemed to wander unrestrained and unbounded through the rich pastures. The Thames, here turreted with villas, and there garlanded with forests, moved on slowly and placidly, like the mighty monarch of the scene, to whom all its other beauties were but accessories, and bore on his bosom a hundred barks and skiffs, whose white sails and gaily fluttering pennons gave life to the whole."

As the Duke of Argyle looked on this inimitable landscape, his thoughts naturally reverted to his

own more grand and scarce less beautiful domain of Inverary.

“‘This is a fine scene,’ he said to his companion, curious, perhaps, to draw out her sentiments ; ‘we have nothing like it in Scotland.’ ‘It’s braw rich feeding for the cows, and they have a fine breed o’ cattle here,’ replied Jeanie, ‘but I like quite as weel to look at the craigs of Arthur’s Seat, and the sea coming in anent than as at a’ these muckle trees.’”

Ruskin, in the same number of “*Præterita*” (vol. iii., chap. iv.), after, in my opinion, a somewhat unjust judgment of the novels that deal with the history of other nations, makes these eulogistic remarks on the *Scotch* novels : “‘*Waverley*,’ ‘*Guy Mannering*,’ ‘*The Antiquary*,’ ‘*Old Mortality*,’ ‘*The Heart of Midlothian*,’ ‘*The Abbot*,’ ‘*Redgauntlet*,’ and ‘*The Fortunes of Nigel*’—they *are*, whatever the modern world may think of them, as faultless throughout as human work can be, and eternal examples of the ineffable art which is taught by the loveliest Nature to her truest children.”

But let us return to Scott himself. Towards the end of November, 1818, Scott received from his friend Lord Sidmouth, then Secretary of State for the Home Department, the formal announcement of the Prince Regent’s desire to confer on him the rank of baronet. The offer was made by the Regent in this year, though it was not actually conferred till after George’s accession, on March 30, 1820. He was the first baronet that George IV. made on succeeding to the throne after his long regency, and Scott accepted the gracious and

unsolicited honour, not only gratefully, but with extreme pride, because it was offered by the King himself, and was in no way due to the prompting of any Minister's advice. "Several of my ancestors," he writes to Joanna Baillie, "bore the title in the seventeenth century, and were it of consequence, I have no reason to be ashamed of the descent, and the respectable persons who connect me with that period, when they carried into the field, like Madoc,

"The Crescent, at whose gleam the Cumbrian oft,
Cursing his perilous tenure, wound his horn ;"

so that, as a gentleman, I may stand on as good a footing as other new creations."

It speaks well for George IV. that he knew how to value Scott; and if his friendship did honour to the poet, it did equal honour to the King. Scott had no doubt a strong personal devotion to his sovereign, despite all his vices; but it betrays a weakness in his character to know that, after his intimacy with the Regent, he began to change his tone with regard to the Princess of Wales. For at first his relations with her were most friendly, and he spoke of an invitation to dine with her at Blackheath, in 1806, as a great honour. In the introduction to the third canto of "Marmion" he wrote a tribute to her father, the Duke of Brunswick:

"Or deem'st thou not our later time
Yields topic meet for classic rhyme?
Hast thou no elegiac verse
For Brunswick's venerable hearse?"

And at the close of the passage he has the following spirited lines :

“And when revolves, in time’s sure change,
The hour of Germany’s revenge,
When breathing fury for her sake,
Some new dominion shall awake,
Her champion, ere he strike, shall come
To whet his sword on Brunswick’s tomb.”

In acknowledgment of this tribute to her father’s memory, he received from the Princess a handsome silver vase. He had written, in 1806, some lines on Lord Melville’s acquittal when impeached by the Liberal Government, and in these he introduces this verse about the Princess Caroline :

“Our King too, our Princess—I dare not say more, sir—
May Providence watch them with mercy and might !
While there’s one Scottish hand that can wag a claymore,
sir,
They shall ne’er want a friend to stand up for their right.
Be damn’d he that dare not,
For my part I’ll spare not
To beauty afflicted a tribute to give ;
Fill it up steadily,
Drink it off readily,
Here’s to the Princess, and long may she live !”

But however ready he may have been at this time to “stand up” for the Princess, it shows that he shared in the weaknesses common to humanity ; for after his intimacy with the Prince Regent began, he grew colder towards her, and, deserting to the other side, spoke of her only with severity.

When George IV. came to Edinburgh, in 1822, it was mainly owing to Scott’s personal influence,

authority, and zeal that the visit was so successful, and the King's reception so enthusiastic. "The local magistrates, bewildered and perplexed with the rush of novelty, threw themselves on him for advice and direction about the merest trifles; and he had to arrange everything, from the ordering of a procession to the cut of a button and the embroidering of a cross." The day on which the King arrived, Tuesday, August 14, was also the day on which William Erskine, then Lord Kinnedder, Scott's most intimate friend, died; but this did not prevent Scott from rowing off in the midst of the rain to the royal yacht, where he was received by his Majesty on the quarter-deck. When his arrival was announced: "What," exclaimed his Majesty, "Sir Walter Scott!—the man in Scotland I most wish to see. Let him come up!" On being presented to the King, and after an appropriate speech in the name of the ladies of Edinburgh, he placed in his Majesty's hands a St. Andrew's cross, in silver, which his fair subjects had provided for him; and the King, with evident marks of satisfaction, made a gracious reply, receiving the gift in the most kind and condescending manner, and promising to wear it in public, in token of acknowledgment to the fair donors. The King then called for a bottle of Highland whisky, and having drunk his health, bestowed on Scott, at his request, the glass which he had just used, and the precious vessel was immediately wrapped up and carefully deposited

in what he conceived to be the safest part of his dress. When Scott returned to his house in Castle Street, he found there the poet Crabbe, and in the delight of seeing the venerable man, the royal gift was forgotten, and, in sitting down beside his friend, the glass was crushed to atoms. His scream and gesture made his wife conclude that he had sat down on a pair of scissors, or the like; but very little harm had been done, except the breaking of the glass, of which alone he had been thinking.

It is difficult to understand how Scott's personal devotion to George IV., for whom he retained to the last a warm regard, and whose death, he persuaded himself, would be a great political calamity to the nation, was consistent with his own moral tone and with the aversion which one of his character must have felt for the vices of the selfish and dissolute King. But probably the glamour which royalty carries with it made him indulgent to the offences against morality committed by his sovereign.

Between 1814 and the end of 1825, Scott's literary labour was interrupted only by one serious illness, and hardly by that; by a few journeyings, one to Paris after the battle of Waterloo, and several to London. He had been for many years in the enjoyment of an income of £10,000 a year from his works alone, besides the emoluments of his office. He had a beautiful home at Abbotsford, which was to him as an idol,

and which it was his delight to embellish with picturesque surroundings outside, and to fill with objects of taste and antiquarian interest within. With the exception of his wife's drawing-room, the decorations of which were left with chivalrous abnegation to its mistress, every room was a museum. He was universally admired and respected. He had "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." Visitors, many of them from distant lands, and not a few from across the Atlantic, were drawn to Abbotsford, not so much desiring to see its beauty and its antiquarian treasures as the owner himself, whose great gifts of genius made his acquaintance an honour. Here came princes: the widowed husband of Princess Charlotte and Prince Gustavus of Sweden, who, since his father's dethronement, had been studying—or what princes call studying—at Edinburgh. Here came many a noble—"baron, or squire, or knight of the shire"; and here came Mrs. Coutts, formerly Miss Mellon, the popular actress, and with her the little duke, who was soon to make her a duchess, and one of her physicians. More congenial visitors also came to do him honour. Wordsworth, Sir Humphry Davy, Thomas Moore, Miss Edgeworth, Captain Basil Hall, and Henry Mackenzie, author of "The Man of Feeling," were among his distinguished guests. He reckoned as his friends most of the illustrious men of his time, and with many of them he kept up a frank and friendly correspondence.

In his "Life," by Lockhart, we find amongst his correspondents not only the famous authors just mentioned, but others—Goethe, Lord Sidmouth, Lord Montagu, James Hogg, Joanna Baillie, Southey, Coleridge, Lord Byron, and many whose names are familiar as household words.

Lockhart gives us a brilliant picture of his life at Abbotsford when he was in the height of his fame, and his children were grown up :

"It was a clear bright September morning, with a sharpness in the air that doubled the animating influence of the sunshine, and all was in readiness for a grand coursing match on Newark Hill. The only guest who had chalked out other sport for himself was the stanchest of anglers, Mr. Rose ; but he, too, was there on his *shelty*, armed with his salmon-rod and landing-net, and attended by his humorous squire Hives and Charles Purdie, a brother of Tom, in those days the most celebrated fisherman of the district. This little group of Waltonians, bound for Lord Somerville's preserve, remained lounging about to witness the start of the main cavalcade. Sir Walter, mounted on Sybil, was marshalling the order of procession with a hunting-whip ; and among a dozen frolicsome youths and maidens, who seemed disposed to laugh at all discipline, appeared each on horseback, each as eager as the youngest sportsman in the troupe, Sir Humphry Davy, Dr. Wollaston, and the patriarch of Scottish *belles lettres*, Henry Mackenzie. 'The Man of Feeling,' however, was persuaded with some difficulty to resign his steed for the present to his faithful negro follower, and to join Lady Scott in the sociable, until we should reach the ground of our *battue*. Laidlaw, on a long-tailed, wiry Highlander, yclept Hoddin Grey, which carried him nimbly and stoutly, although his feet almost touched the ground as he sat, was the adjutant. But the most picturesque figure was the illustrious inventor of the safety-lamp. He had come for his favourite sport of angling, and had been practising it successfully with Rose, his travelling companion, for two or three days preceding this ; but he had not prepared for coursing fields, and had left Charles Purdie's troupe for Sir Walter's on a sudden thought ; and his fisherman's costume—a brown hat with flexible brim, surrounded with line upon

line, and innumerable fly-hooks ; jack-boots, worthy of a Dutch smuggler, and a fustian surtout, dappled with the blood of salmon—made a fine contrast with the smart jackets, white cord breeches, and well-polished jockey-boots of the less distinguished cavaliers about him. Dr. Wollaston was in black, and with his noble, serene dignity of countenance might have passed for a sporting archbishop. Mr. Mackenzie, at this time in the seventy-sixth year of his age, with a white hat turned up with green, green spectacles, green jacket, and long brown leather gaiters buttoned upon his nether anatomy, wore a dog-whistle round his neck, and had all over the air of as resolute a devotee as the gay captain of Huntly Burn. Tom Purdie and his subalterns had preceded us by a few hours with all the grayhounds that could be collected at Abbotsford, Darnick, and Melrose ; but the giant Maida had remained as his master's orderly, and now gambolled about Sybil Grey, barking for mere joy, like a spaniel puppy.

“The order of march had been all settled, and the sociable was just getting under weigh, when the Lady Anne broke from the line, screaming with laughter, and exclaimed, ‘Papa, papa ! I knew you could never think of going without your pet.’ Scott looked round, and I rather think there was a blush as well as a smile upon his face when he perceived a little black pig frisking about his pony, and evidently a self-elected addition to the party of the day. He tried to look stern, and cracked his whip at the creature, but was in a moment obliged to join in the general cheer. Poor piggy soon found a strap round his neck, and was dragged into the background. Scott, watching the retreat, repeated with mock pathos the first verse of an old pastoral song :

“‘What will I do gin my hoggie die ?

My joy, my pride, my hoggie !

My only beast, I had nae mae,

And wow ! but I was vogie !’

The cheers were redoubled, and the squadron moved on. This pig had taken—nobody knew how—a most sentimental attachment to Scott, and was constantly urging its pretensions to be admitted a regular member of his tail, along with the greyhounds and terriers ; but, indeed, I remember him suffering another summer under the same sort of pertinacity on the part of an affectionate hen. I leave the explanation for philosophers ; but such were the facts. I have too much respect for the vulgarly culumniated donkey to name him in the same category of pets with the pig and the hen, but a

year or two after this time my wife used to drive a couple of these animals in a little garden chair, and whenever her father appeared at the door of our cottage we were sure to see Hannah More and Lady Morgan (as Anne Scott had wickedly christened them) trotting from their pasture to lay their noses over the paling, and as Washington Irving says of the old white-haired hedger with the Parisian snuff-box, 'to have a pleasant crack wi' the laird.' "

Scott, as we learn from the above passage, had a strong attraction for dumb animals, and no wonder, for he loved them heartily, and had an especial fondness for dogs. He could enter with all his soul into the words of Coleridge in "The Ancient Mariner" :

"He prayeth best who loveth best,
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

But Scott had also a sort of fascination for all who were in any way dependent on him, especially his own servants and labourers. "Sir Walter speaks to every man as if they were blood-relations," was a common remark when anyone would describe his demeanour towards them. In Lockhart's Life we read the following touching illustration of this : There was a little hunchbacked tailor named William Goodfellow, living near Abbotsford, and there called "*Robin* Goodfellow," who was employed to make the curtains of the new library, and who was very proud of his work. He fell ill soon afterwards, and Sir Walter paid him the most unremitting attention.

"I can never forget," says Lockhart, "the evening on which the poor tailor died. When Scott entered the hovel

he found everything silent, and inferred from the looks of the good woman in attendance that the patient had fallen asleep, and that they feared his sleep was the final one. He murmured some syllables of kind regret. At the sound of his voice the dying tailor unclosed his eyes, and eagerly and wistfully sat up, clasping his hands with an expression of rapturous gratefulness and devotion that, in the midst of deformity, disease, pain and wretchedness, was at once beautiful and sublime. He cried with a loud voice, 'The Lord bless and reward you!' and expired with the effort."

After Scott's failure, Lockhart writes :

"Before I leave this period I must note how greatly I admired the manner in which all his dependents appeared to have met the reverse of his fortunes, a reverse which infused very considerable alterations in the circumstances of every one of them. The butler, instead of being the easy chief of a large establishment, was now doing half the work of the house at probably half his former wages. Old Peter, who had been for five-and-twenty years a dignified coachman, was now ploughman-in-ordinary, only putting his horses to the carriage upon high and rare occasions ; and so on with all the rest that remained of the ancient train. And all, to my view, seemed happier than they had ever done before."

I give these anecdotes, as they show us what manner of man Scott was, and how loved he was by those brought close to him in daily life.

Captain Basil Hall, from what he saw at Abbotsford, on Sunday, shows how in Scott reverence was united to genius :

"As his guests rose from breakfast, he said : 'Ladies and gentlemen, I shall read prayers at eleven, when I expect you all to attend.' He did not, continues the narrator, treat the subject as if ashamed of it, which some do. He did not say, 'Those who please may come, and anyone who likes may stay away,' as I have often heard. He read the Church of England service, and did it with singular beauty and impressiveness, varying his voice according to the subject ; and as the first lesson was from a very poetical part of

Isaiah, he kindled up, and read it with a great deal of animation, without, however, interfering with the solemnity of the occasion."

And now we must look at Scott when dark clouds began to overshadow his prosperous career.

From the date of his baronetcy he had launched out into a considerable increase of expenditure. He had always forestalled his income—spending the purchase-money of his poems and novels before they were written; but the obligations that he incurred on his own account, and the expenses that he incurred for other people—among them Terry, the actor, for whom, when he became joint-lessee and manager of the Adelphi Theatre, London, Scott became surety for £1,250—would have been nothing when compared with his income had his bills on Constable been duly honoured. The printing firm of Ballantyne and Co. was so deeply involved with Constable's house that it necessarily became insolvent when he stopped. Scott had a share in the printing-house, which fell with Constable, and the obligations of which amounted to £117,000. Such a failure as this, at the age of fifty-five, when the freshness of youth was gone—when he saw his eldest son's prospects blighted as well as his own—would have paralyzed a man of less iron nerve, or unsupported by equal courage and pride. Domestic sorrows were closing fast around him; he was unwell when the crash came, and was taking sedatives which discomposed his brain. The final failure was announced to him on

January 17, 1826; and twelve days before this he enters in his diary :

“ Much alarmed. I had walked till 12 o'clock with Skene and Russell, and then sat down to my work. To my horror and surprise I could neither write nor spell, but put one word down for another, and wrote nonsense. I was much overpowered at the same time, and could not conceive the reason. I fell asleep, however, in my chair, and slept for two hours. On my waking my head was clearer, and I began to recollect that last night I had taken the anodyne left for the purpose by Clarkson, and being disturbed in the middle of the night I had not slept it off.”

Such was his state of health—suffering from a slight attack of what is now called “aphasia,” a brain disease, the most striking symptom of which is that one word is mistaken for another—when Scott resolved to work for his creditors as he had worked for himself, and to pay off, if possible, the whole £117,000 by his own literary exertions.

Calamities seldom come single spies, more often in battalions. His wife's health was failing; he had been anxiously watching over her for two years, and now her disease took a more serious turn. Yet, with unparalleled courage, this brave man, without a reproach and without a complaint, toiled to retrieve his fortunes and pay off his liabilities. His house in Edinburgh was sold, and he went into lodgings; the bright life at Abbotsford, of which we have seen a glimpse, came to an end; and his estate was conveyed to trustees for the benefit of his creditors till such time as he should pay off Ballantyne and Co.'s debt, which in his lifetime he was not able to do. Nothing can be more touching than to read some

of the entries in his diary after the blow had fallen. On January 17 he writes :

"James Ballantyne came this morning, good honest fellow, with a visage as black as the crook. He hopes no salvation—has, indeed, taken measures to stop. It is hard, after having fought such a battle. I have apologized for not attending the Royal Society Club, who have a '*gaudeamus*' on this day, and seemed to count much on my being the *præses*. My old acquaintance, Miss Elizabeth Clark, sister of Willie, died suddenly. I cannot choose, but wish it had been Sir W. S., and yet the feeling is unmanly. I have Anne, my wife, and Charles to look after. I felt rather sneaking as I came home from the Parliament House—felt as if I were liable *monstari digito* in no very pleasant way. But this must be borne *cum cæteris*; and, thank God, however uncomfortable, I do not feel despondent."

On the next day, the day after these hopeless tidings, he records a bad night—a wish that the next two days were past, but that "the worst is over." And on the same day he set about making notes for the *magnum opus*, as he called it—the complete edition of all his novels, with a new introduction and notes. On January 21, after a number of business details, he quotes from Job: "Naked we entered the world, and naked we leave it; blessed be the name of the Lord." On the day following he says :

"I feel neither dishonoured nor broken down by the bad—now truly bad—news I have received. I have walked my last in the domains I have planted; sat the last time in the halls I have built. But death would have taken them from me if misfortune had spared them. My poor people, whom I loved so well! There is just another die to turn up against me in this run of ill-luck—*i.e.*, if I should break my magic wand in the fall from this elephant, and lose my popularity with my fortune. Then Woodstock and Boney [his life of Napoleon] may go to the paper-maker, and I may take to smoking cigars and drinking grog, or turn devotee and intoxicate the brain another way."

And then he adds that when he sets to work doggedly he is exactly the same man he ever was—"neither low-spirited nor distrait"—nay, that adversity is to him "a tonic and bracer." Within four months of the cruel calamity his wife died. In his "Journal," under the date May 15, he makes the entry: "Received the melancholy intelligence that all is over at Abbotsford." Then, again, on the following day:

"She died at nine in the morning, after being very ill for two days—easy at last. I arrived here (Abbotsford) late last night. Anne is worn out, and has had hysterics, which returned on my arrival. Her broken accents were like those of a child, the language as well as the tones broken, but in the most gentle voice of submission: 'Poor mamma—never return again—gone for ever—a better place.' Then, when she came to herself, she spoke with sense, freedom, and strength of mind, till her weakness returned. It would have been inexpressibly moving to me as a stranger—what was it, then, to the father and the husband? For myself, I scarce know how I feel, sometimes as firm as the Bass Rock, sometimes as weak as the wave that breaks on it. I am as alert in thinking and deciding as I ever was in my life. Yet when I contrast what this place now is, with what it has been not long since, I think my heart will break. Lonely, aged, deprived of my family, all but poor Anne, an impoverished and embarrassed man, I am deprived of the sharer of my thoughts and counsels, who could always talk down my sense of the calamitous apprehensions which break the heart that must bear them alone. Even her foibles were of service to me, by giving me things to think of beyond my weary self-reflections.

"I have seen her. The figure I beheld is, and is not, my Charlotte—my thirty years' companion. There is the same symmetry of form, though those limbs are rigid which were once so gracefully elastic, but that yellow mask, with pinched features, which seems to mock life rather than emulate it, can it be the face that was once so full of lively expression? I will not look on it again. Anne thinks her little changed, because the latest idea she had formed of her mother is as she appeared under circumstances of sickness

and pain. Mine go back to a period of comparative health. If I write long in this way I shall write down my resolution, which I should rather write up, if I could. I wonder how I shall do with the large portion of thoughts which were hers for thirty years. I suspect they will be hers yet for a long time at least. But I will not blaze cambric and crape in the public eye like a disconsolate widower, that most affected of all characters."

His home was now empty. His children were no longer near him; the eldest son, Walter, had married, in 1825, Miss Jobson, of Lochore, and was at this time with his regiment; the second, Charles, had just gone to Oxford; one of his daughters was married to Lockhart, and settled in London with children of her own; only Anne, the second girl, was left to comfort him. There was a general sympathy with his troubles. He had many friends, known and unknown, and all sorrowed in his sorrows. Offers of assistance came from all quarters, the highest and the lowest; and one anonymous friend would have placed £30,000 in his hands; but he refused them all. "Unless I die," he wrote to Lockhart, "I shall bear up against this foul weather. A penny I will not borrow from anyone." In this same letter he begs his son-in-law not to think he is writing "in the heat of excited resistance to bad fortune." "My dear Lockhart, I am as calm and temperate as ever you saw me, and working at 'Woodstock' like a very tiger." And this, although his own health, long breaking, gave him constant suffering, for even in earlier days he had often written struggling manfully against illness.

That most tragic and touching of his romances, "The Bride of Lammermoor," was in great part dictated, owing to ill-health; and his amanuenses, William Laidlaw and John Ballantyne, declared that they could hardly keep pace with the rapidity of his thoughts. Laidlaw would often beseech him to stop dictating when his audible suffering filled every pause. "Nay, Willie," he answered, "only see that the doors are fast. I would fain keep all the cry as well as all the wool to ourselves; but as to giving over work, that can only be done when I am woollen." John Ballantyne told Lockhart that he always took care to have a dozen of pens made before he seated himself opposite to the sofa on which Scott lay; and that, though he often turned himself on his pillow with a groan of torment, he usually continued the sentence in the same breath. And now, some years later, spirit once again triumphed over matter, for, in the midst of failing health, he wrote on, wrote so constantly that, between January, 1826, and January, 1828, he earned for his creditors nearly £40,000. "Woodstock" sold for £8,228, "a matchless sale," as Sir Walter remarked, "for less than three months' work." The first two editions of the "Life of Napoleon Buonaparte," on which Scott spent two years of unremitting labour, sold for £18,000. And there can be no doubt that, had his health lasted, he would have redeemed his obligation on behalf of Ballantyne and Co. within some eight or nine

years at most of their lamentable failure. At his death there remained only £30,000 unpaid, and within fifteen years this sum also was paid off by the sale of his copyright. Can we wonder that work done under failing health, and a half-paralyzed brain, did not equal the work of his prime, and that "Count Robert of Paris" and "Castle Dangerous" are not as vigorous as "Waverley" or "Ivanhoe"; though even his latter years included such novels as "Woodstock" and "The Fair Maid of Perth," and also the "Tales of a Grandfather"? It was impossible that such a tremendous strain should last. On February 15, 1830, he had his first true paralytic seizure. It was but slight. He struggled against it with his usual iron power of will, and actually managed to stagger out of the room where his friend, Miss Young, was sitting with him, into the drawing-room where his daughter was, but there he fell his full length on the floor. He was cupped, and fully recovered his speech during the course of the day, but Lockhart thinks that after this his style never had the lucidity and terseness of his former days. In the course of the year he retired from his duties of Clerk of Session, and his publishers hoped that, by engaging him on a new and complete edition of his works, they might wean him from further attempts at imaginative creation, for which he was now so much less fit. But he would not listen to their counsels, and, striving to kindle a failing imagination with some-

thing of the old fire, he tried to recast "Count Robert de Paris," and began "Castle Dangerous" in July, 1831.

In the September of this year the disease of the brain increased considerably, and the fancy took him that he had paid all his debts, and that he was again a free man. The illusion was a happy one in some respects, for he yielded to the entreaties of his friends, and consented to try the effect of travel on his health, not so much with the hope on their part of arresting such a disease as his, as of diverting him from fresh efforts in a field in which now, alas! no honours could be won.

Wordsworth came on September 21 to say "farewell" to his old friend, and on the next day—the last at home—they spent the morning together in a visit to Newark. "Hence," as Lockhart says, "the last of the three poems by which Wordsworth has connected his name to all time with the most romantic of Scottish streams." He refers to the beautiful poem "Yarrow Revisited." And at Abbotsford the same evening Wordsworth composed the following sonnet, "On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford for Naples":

"A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain,
Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light
Engendered, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height :
Spirits of power, assembled there, complain
For kindred power departing from their sight ;
While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blithe strain,
Saddens his voice again, and yet again.

Lift up your hearts, ye mourners ! for the might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes ;
Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue
Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows
Follow this wondrous Potentate. Be true,
Ye winds of ocean, and the midland sea,
Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope !"

We need but briefly follow the minstrel abroad. He visited Malta, Naples, and Rome, where he only stayed long enough to let his daughter see something of the place, hurrying on to Venice, where he was still strong enough to insist on scrambling down into the dungeon adjoining the Bridge of Sighs. At Frankfort he entered a book-seller's shop, where the man brought out a lithograph of Abbotsford, and Scott, remarking, "I know that already, sir," left the shop unrecognised, more than ever longing to be at home. At Nimeguen, on June 9, while in a steamboat on the Rhine, he had his most serious attack of apoplexy, but would still continue his journey, and being lifted into an English steamboat at Rotterdam on June 11, he arrived in London on the 13th. There he met and recognised his children, and, as if expecting immediate death, gave them repeatedly his solemn blessing. He was carried to St. James's Hotel, in Jermyn Street, where he lay without any power to converse ; and there it was that Allan Cunningham, on walking home one night, found a group of working men at the corner of the street, who stopped him and asked—"as if there was but one death-bed in London : 'Do you know, sir, if this is the street where he is lying ?' "

His great yearning to return to Abbotsford induced his physicians to consent to his removal, and on a calm, clear afternoon, July 7, 1832, he was lifted into a carriage, and, followed by his trembling and weeping daughters, was taken to the steamboat, where the captain gave up for his use his own private cabin on deck. On arriving at Newhaven, late on the 9th, careful preparations were made for his landing, and in apparent unconsciousness he was conveyed to Douglas Hotel in St. Andrew Square.

On July 11 he was again placed in his carriage, and remained unconscious during the first two stages of the journey to Tweedside; but as the carriage entered the valley of the Gala, he began to look about him. Presently he murmured a name or two: "Gala water, surely; Buckholm; Torwood-Lee." As the outline of the Eildon Hills burst on him, he became greatly excited, and when turning himself on the couch his eye caught at length his own towers, at the distance of a mile, he sprang up with a cry of delight. So long as his woods and house were in sight, it required occasionally the strength of both the physician and his son-in-law to keep him in the carriage. Mr. Laidlaw was waiting at the porch, and assisted the others in lifting him into the dining-room, where his bed had been prepared, where he sat bewildered for a few moments, and then, resting his eyes on Laidlaw, said: "Ah, Willie Laidlaw! O man, how often have I

thought of you!" His dogs, coming round his chair, began to fawn upon him and lick his hands, and he alternately smiled and wept over them until he fell asleep.

The next morning, expressing an ardent wish to be carried out into his garden, he was wheeled in a bath-chair before his door, and up and down for some time on the turf and among the rose-beds, then in full bloom. For a time he sat in silence, smiling placidly on his grand-children and his dogs, now and then admiring the house, the screen of the garden, the flowers and the trees; and by-and-by conversing a little, saying "he was happy to be at home—that he felt better than he had ever done since he left it, and would, perhaps, disappoint the doctors after all." On being wheeled through his rooms, and up and down the hall and the great library, he kept saying: "I've seen much, but nothing like my own house; give me one turn more!" He was gentle as an infant, and allowed himself to be put to bed again the moment he was told he had had enough for one day. Next morning he was better, and, after being for a couple of hours out of doors, he desired to be drawn into the library and placed by the central window, that he might look down upon the Tweed. He expressed a wish that his son-in-law should read to him, and when he was asked from what book, he said: "Need you ask? There is but one." "I chose," says Lockhart, "the 14th chapter of St. John's Gospel. He

listened with mild devotion, and said, when I had done: 'Well, this is a great comfort. I have followed you distinctly, and I feel as if I were yet to be myself again.'” So for a day or two. To amuse him, and at his desire, Lockhart would read to him a bit of his favourite, Crabbe; but, strange to say, when he listened to any passage from that poet, he seemed to think it was taken from some new volume published while he was in Italy; while if the Bible were the book read, his recollection of it appeared to be lively, and he remembered perfectly some of Dr. Watts' hymns when repeated by his grandson, a child of six years old. He once imagined that he could write again, but when he was seated at his desk, and his daughter Sophia put the pen into his hand, his fingers refused to close upon it, and it dropped on the paper. He sank back among his pillows, the tears rolling down his cheek. Later, when he awoke from a slumber into which he had fallen, and Laidlaw said, in his hearing, “Sir Walter has had a little repose,” he replied, “No, Willie; no repose for Sir Walter but in the grave.” The tears again rushed from his eyes. “Friends,” said he, with the old pride—“friends, don't let me expose myself; get me to bed, that's the only place.”

After this he never left his room. He seemed to suffer no bodily pain; and his mind, though hopelessly clouded, appeared to be dwelling, with rare exceptions, on serious and solemn things;

but occasionally his thoughts wandered, and his fancy was at Jedburgh (where he had been once hissed because of his opposition to the Reform Bill), and the cry, "Burke Sir Walter!" escaped in a melancholy tone from his lips. But generally, when his indistinct words could be made out, they were fragments of the Bible, some passage from Isaiah or Job, the verse of a Psalm, a petition in the Litany, or a stanza of some of the magnificent Latin hymns—especially the "Dies Iræ"; "and," says Lockhart, "I think the very last *stanza* that we could make out was the first of a still greater favourite":

"Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lachrymosa,
Dum pendebat Filius."

He lingered till September 21, more than two months from the day of his reaching home, and a year from the day of Wordsworth's arrival at Abbotsford before his departure for the Continent, with only one clear interval of consciousness—on Monday, September 17. On that day Lockhart was called to his bedside, and found him composed and conscious, though in the last extreme of feebleness. His eye was clear and calm, every trace of the wild fire of delirium extinguished. "Lockhart," he said, "I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man, be virtuous, be religious, be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here." He paused, and Lockhart said, "Shall I send for Sophia and Anne?" "No," said he; "don't disturb them. Poor souls! I know they

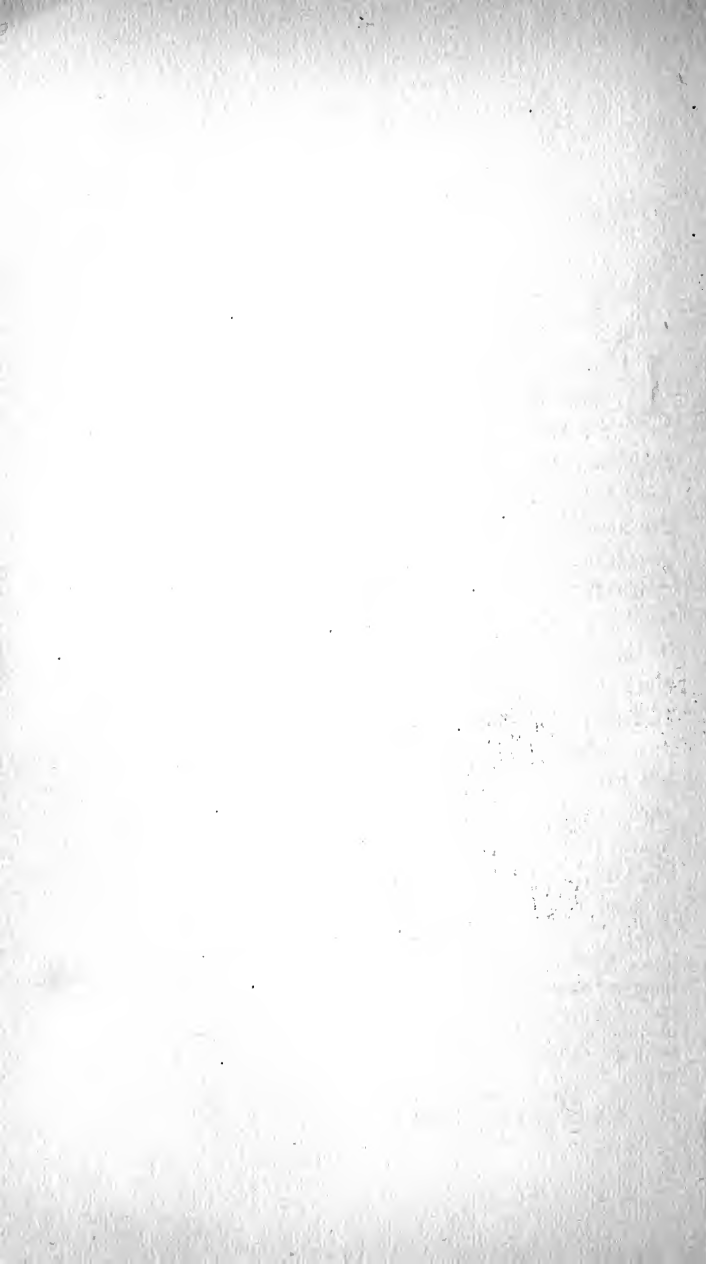
were up all night. God bless you all!" With this he sank into a very tranquil sleep, and, indeed, scarcely afterwards gave any sign of consciousness except for an instant on the arrival of his sons. And so, four days afterwards, on September 21, 1832, at half-past one in the afternoon, Sir Walter breathed his last in the presence of all his children. It was a beautiful day—so warm that every window was wide open, and so perfectly still that the sound of all others most delicious to his ears—the gentle ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles—was distinctly audible as they knelt around the bed, and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes. He died a month after completing his sixty-first year.

Easy would it be to moralize here on the vanity of human wishes. His great desire through life, the object of all his labours, was to found and enrich a new branch of the famous clan of Scott. For this he wrote; for this he struggled; for this he aimed at success. And yet the dearest hopes of his heart were never realized, and his last years were clouded by illness and sorrow. And yet he never showed himself so truly great as in adversity, and never in his most prosperous days was he so truly honoured and admired as when he girt himself up to retrieve his ruined fortunes. In prosperity and adversity alike, Sir Walter—generous, large-hearted, honourable—left behind him an unstained name. He is, indeed, "one of the few great authors of modern Europe," as Lockhart says, "who stand acquitted of having written a

line that ought to have embittered the bed of death." In the days of fame, and wealth, and honour, his was but the life of the natural prosperous man, and the real nobility of his character, and its moral grandeur, was only fully seen when made to pass through the furnace of adversity. As the night brings out the stars, so the dark shadow of his sorrow brought out many fine points in his character which otherwise would have remained unknown. His religion—for he believed himself a true Christian—may have been wanting in the finer spiritual element which would have given it elevation, and transfigured righteousness into holiness; but he seemed afraid of enthusiasm, and thought that "it interfered with the submissive and tranquil mood which is the only true religious mood." Nevertheless, however much afraid he might have been of what he calls "indulging his imagination on religious subjects," we cannot but regret this lack of enthusiasm in spiritual things, for it would have raised his life into a higher ideal than that which it attained, and thrown around it that light from the other world which would have added so much to its grandeur and transformed it into spiritual beauty. But still we must acknowledge that, in a sense of duty, in courage, and in patience, he merits a high place among those who, to use Tennyson's words, have been able to display

"One equal temper of heroic hearts
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will,
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.



SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

IT was a saying of Wordsworth that “many men in this age had done wonderful *things*, as Davy, Scott, Cuvier, etc., but that Coleridge was the only wonderful *man* he knew.” This seems to have been the judgment of all who had the privilege of knowing the poet, the moralist, the psychologist, and the philosopher. The man was more than his works, the author greater than his books. Great as his reputation was while he lived, it has increased since his death; and he exercises still a powerful influence over the thinkers of this generation. Those who knew him in his more vigorous days bore witness to the power of his regal mind, and to the brilliancy of his conversational eloquence, which was peculiar and unique of its kind. De Quincey, speaking of a visit that he made to the poet, refers to his conversation on that occasion in the following words:

“That point being settled, Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that, having been checked and fretted by rocks, or thwarting islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters, and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical that it was possible to conceive.”

A Quarterly Reviewer in an article on "Coleridge's Poetical Works," written in the year 1834, thus sums up the difference between the conversation of Coleridge and Sir James Mackintosh, also a brilliant and elegant talker :

"To listen to Mackintosh was to inhale perfume ; it pleased, but it did not satisfy. The effect of an hour with Coleridge is to set you thinking ; his words haunt you for a week afterwards ; they are spells, brightenings, revelations. In short it is, if we may venture to draw so bold a line, the whole difference between talent and genius."

It were impossible in a limited space to enter upon the labours of Coleridge as a moralist, or as a metaphysical philosopher, or to speak of such literary works as the "Friend," the "Lay Sermons," the "Aids to Reflection," and "The Church and State." His "Table Talk" is a delightful volume, full of beauties ; and his "Notes" on English Divines present many examples of acute theological criticism. To attempt anything like a review of these volumes would be beyond our limits ; but we may say in passing that there is not one of them which does not supply to the patient reader topics suggestive of the deepest thought and the greatest interest.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the youngest son of a Devonshire clergyman, Vicar of Ottery St. Mary, and master of its Grammar School. He was born in the year 1772. His father was a man of guileless simplicity, described by his son as a sort of Parson Adams, distinguished alike by his learning and his inexperience of the world. It

is strange to say that he was an object of dislike and persecution to his mother, and being a child of delicate condition, he was excluded from the sports of his brothers, and was left to find his amusement in books. He was early attracted to works of imagination, and before he was six years old he had thrice read through the stories of the "Arabian Nights"; and when alone he pursued his dreams of fancy, and realized them in his solitary games. When the death of his father broke up his quiet home, the delicate and sensitive boy was removed to the heart of London, and placed on the foundation of Christ's Hospital. He went there in the summer of 1782, and carried to the din and dust of London images of the country, its green lanes and grassy meadows, its old church with its gray tower; and these refreshed the heart of the dreaming boy, as he roamed fancy free through the crowded streets of the great city. Here he found himself associated with several boys who won distinction in after-life; and he formed a lasting friendship with the brilliant Leigh Hunt and the inimitable Charles Lamb. Coleridge early displayed his genius, outstripped all competition, and rose to be the captain of the school. Before completing his fifteenth year he had translated the Greek Hymns of Synesius into English Anacreontic verse. This was no school-task undertaken by compulsion, but was a work of choice and a labour of love. An interesting anecdote is told of him at this time. Strolling one day down the

Strand, absorbed in a reverie, and fancying himself Leander swimming across the Hellespont, he thrust out his hands before him like a swimmer; and as one of his hands touched a gentleman's pocket, the stranger laid hold of him as a pick-pocket. The frightened boy explained the circumstance, and the gentleman was so much touched that he procured him admission to a library in King Street, where he devoured catalogues, folios, and books of all kinds, borrowing daily the two volumes allowed him, and then curling himself up in some sunny corner where he read unconscious of everything but the pages, and the fancies which they conjured up.

All were attracted to the dreamy Bluecoat Boy. His masters looked upon him as a genius, and his schoolfellows regarded him with admiration. He had made friends, and all were astonished as he poured forth in conversation, inconceivable in a lad of his years, stores of philosophy, metaphysical speculations, and quotations from the classics. In the spring of 1791 he went to Jesus College, Cambridge, at the age of nineteen, where he won some distinction as a scholar, having obtained the prize for a Greek Ode in Sapphic metre, of which the sentiments (as he observes himself) were better than the Greek. He soon began to betray that infirmity of purpose and that want of perseverance which proved to be his bane. Instead of following out the studies of the University, his reading was desultory. He read

whatever pleased his fancy or was agreeable to his tastes—it might be philosophy, or poetry, or politics; and his rooms became a rendezvous for all who loved conversation better than work, and who preferred debates on the pamphlets of Burke and the speculations of Voltaire, to the dramas of Æschylus or the dialogues of Plato.

It was an age of excitement both in religion and politics. Unitarianism was the popular creed. The French Revolution in its early stages had a fascination for minds enthusiastic in what was hoped to be the cause of liberty, and many ardent youths of the University allowed themselves to be borne away on the strong current of popular thought. Coleridge embraced Unitarian opinions, and ranged himself on what he believed to be the side of freedom.

All this interrupted his quiet habits of study, and weary of restraint, in a frenzy of unhappy feeling at the rejection he met with from a lady whom he loved, he left Cambridge, and enlisted as a private in a Dragoon regiment. He fell off his horse on several occasions, and being ill framed for a good rider, and finding a peculiar difficulty in grooming his steed, he only spent a few months in the army.*

* De Quincey—who, however, will vouch for no part of the story—mentions a romantic incident which, it is said, led to his discharge from a profession which under no circumstances would have been congenial to his tastes. “Coleridge, as a private, was on one occasion mounted on guard at the door of a room in which his officers were giving a ball. Two of them had a dispute upon some Greek word or

He returned to Cambridge unsettled and dejected, and, despairing of success, gave up the hope of attaining a Fellowship. Forming an acquaintance at this critical time with the two Wedgwoods, the celebrated manufacturers of Etruria, they became his friends, and admiring his genius, they subscribed to send him to Germany, where, at the University of Göttingen, he completed his education according to his own scheme. On his return to England he attended Mr. Thomas Wedgwood throughout the long anomalous illness which brought him to the grave. By the death of Mr. Wedgwood, Coleridge succeeded to an annuity of £75, which that gentleman bequeathed to him. Mr. Wedgwood's brother granted him a similar allowance, and from this time he could reckon on a small but certain income.

Still in profound sympathy with the French Revolution, he, with two or three friends, who were worshippers of liberty, and had theories of superhuman virtue, resolved to seek in America happier fortunes than the Old World contained; and at the close of 1794 these enthusiastic students from Oxford and Cambridge met in Bristol, and resolved to emigrate to the banks of the Susquehanna. Now came plans for raising

passage when close to Coleridge's station. He interposed his authentic decision of the case. The officers stared as though one of their horses had sung 'Rule Britannia,' questioned him, heard his story, pitied his misfortunes, and finally subscribed to purchase his discharge."

the wind, and struggles to escape the pangs of hunger; and lectures were announced in Bristol—six shillings for the course—on subjects wide in their range and magnificent in their scope. Southey proposed to deal with history, and his syllabus embraced a period extending from the first origin of society to the legislation of Solon, and thence on to the American War. Coleridge took as his themes Milton and Sidney, Mirabeau and Tom Paine, Oliver Cromwell and Robespierre, Mazarin and Pitt; and into his plan entered the extent and origin of evil, the evidences and corruptions of Christianity; and he hoped to evolve a grand social scheme which would convert all men to Unitarianism, and make them wise, and pure, and perfect.

As might be expected, nothing came of so grandiloquent a prospectus. Already absence of mind and disregard of order began to be marked features in Coleridge's daily life; no appointments were kept; the lecture-room was often crowded, but the lecturer was not to be found; and as to letters, he opened none and answered none. Amidst daylight realities, he spent his time in a deep reverie or waking dream. It is not surprising under the circumstances that he often found himself in want of money, and that he formed various plans for raising what is as needful in this practical world for the philosopher and the poet as for the dullest and most prosaic of men. To his kind bookseller—the most liberal of friends

—he offered to write poems, songs, and epics in blank verse, all of which prospects were pleasantly conceived, faithfully promised, and never carried into execution. Upon the faith of these “airy nothings” Coleridge married. His wife was a Miss Fricker, one of four or five sisters in humble circumstances, who lived at Bristol, and who maintained an irreproachable character, though exposed by their personal attractions to some peril, and to the detractions of envy. Another of the sisters became the wife of Southey. Unfortunately Mrs. Coleridge was not a woman who could comprehend her husband’s intellectual powers, or had any sympathy with his ruling pursuits; and though she was in all circumstances of her married life a virtuous wife and conscientious mother, yet their home was not a happy one, and its domestic peace was often disturbed. To embarrassments of a pecuniary nature was added an incompatibility of temper and disposition which in a great measure robbed life of its sunshine and added to its gloom. Another circumstance which marred the harmony of the young married couple was the friendship which Coleridge formed with a young lady who became their neighbour, who was intellectually very superior to Mrs. Coleridge, and had a true sympathy with the husband’s pursuits. Although no shadow of suspicion rested upon the moral conduct of either party, yet Mrs. Coleridge felt that she held but a divided sway over her

husband's heart, which could not but be deeply mortifying to a young wife; and the arrow was even more sharply barbed when others—her own female servant amongst the number—began to drop expressions which alternately implied pity for her as an injured woman, or contempt for her as a tame one.

Their first home was in a cottage near the Severn, very picturesque in its external aspect, with roses clambering over the wall and round the windows, but very comfortless in its internal arrangements, with no paper on the walls and no supplies in the kitchen. In order to meet his daily wants he writes to his friend the bookseller, now offering him a sonnet, and now a ballad; now proposing to print a pamphlet for the instruction of the public; and now to publish eighteen different works in quarto; and as a *per contra* he begs his friend to send him “a tea-kettle, a tin dust-pan, teaspoons, a cheese-toaster, a keg of porter, allspice, ginger, and rice.” Thus passed two years away in futile plans and projects never to be fulfilled.

In 1796 he attempts to raise money in another way, and he resolves to publish a periodical, the *Watchman*, every eighth day, for the small sum of fourpence, which is to treat of all kinds of subjects, to teach all truth, that all may know the truth, and that the truth may make them free. He hurries to the manufacturing districts to find subscribers; teaches philosophy with more or less success to

tallow-chandlers and cotton-spinners; argues with infidels; reasons with Dr. Darwin; preaches Socinianism at Birmingham and Sheffield; wears a blue coat in the pulpit, and is greatly disturbed when forced in the former town to present himself to his audience in a gown. Nor is he altogether regardless of enjoyment on his tour. He often finds himself in pleasant company; sees interesting sights; eats good dinners at a late hour, and is solaced and entertained by the music of the concert-room. He also starts a grand scheme of education, and proposes to set up a school at Derby. He thinks of becoming a regular Unitarian preacher; tries his hand at two sermons at Bath, and gives instead two lectures on the Corn Laws and the Hair Powder Tax, which were unfortunately considered to be dull. Are not these, and other incidents of a similar nature, told us in his letters? The *Watchman* lived through nine numbers, and then died suddenly of inanition.

But though the *Watchman* died, Coleridge lived, and his genius attracted to him many friends. At one time a young man, the son of a banker, Mr. Lloyd, enters his family as a boarder, in order to enjoy his society; at another, an acquaintance who admires his powers of conversation settles in his neighbourhood.

It was now that he formed with Southey a scheme for emigrating to America under the learned name of "Pantisocracy." "It differed little," as De Quincey says, "except in its Grecian

name, from any other scheme for mitigating the privations of a wilderness, by settling in a cluster of families bound together by congenial tastes and uniform principles, rather than in self-depending, insulated households." The plan was never carried out. A fierce quarrel parted the friends, and England, not America, was to be the home of Coleridge.

About this time he wrote a tragedy, which Sheridan accepted, and brought out on the stage of Drury Lane.*

In 1798 was published Wordsworth's famous volume of "Lyrical Ballads," to which Coleridge contributed "The Ancient Mariner," together with some other pieces. In the autumn of this year he visited North Germany in company with Mr. and Miss Wordsworth. Their tour was chiefly confined to the Hartz Mountains and the neighbourhood; and after fourteen months the

* The success of the play was marred by Sheridan's inability to sacrifice what he thought a good jest. One scene presented a cave with streams of water creeping down the sides, and the first words were in a sort of mimicry of the sound: "Drip, drip, drip!" upon which Sheridan repeated aloud to the assembled green-room, especially convoked for the purpose of hearing the play read: "'Drip, drip, drip!' in short, it is all dripping." The theatre falling afterwards into the hands of Lord Byron and Mr. Whitbread, his lordship sent for Coleridge, was very kind to his brother poet, and requested that the play might be represented; this desire was complied with, and it received his support. Although Mr. Whitbread did not give it the advantage of a single new scene, yet the popularity of the play was such that the principal actor, who had performed in it with great success, made choice of it for his benefit night, and it brought an overflowing house.

little party returned to England. He now became the editor of the literary department of the *Morning Post*, and on its staff were also Wordsworth and Southey. In 1801 he settled at Keswick, no doubt attracted to the Lake Country by Wordsworth. Here his health began to be affected, and he suffered from severe attacks of rheumatism, accompanied by difficulty in breathing, which, with a constant sensation of weight, made him think that his heart was affected. In the spring of 1804 he was induced to seek change of air, and to try the climate of Malta; and here his powers of conversation had such an effect on the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, that he appointed him to the office of Secretary, then vacant. Unhappily in Malta he formed, if he did not confirm and cherish, the habit of taking opium in large quantities. He began the habit as a relief from bodily pain and nervous irritation, and he continued it as a source of luxurious sensations. When he had once tasted the enchanted cup he returned to its charms again and again in order to excite his animal spirits by artificial stimulants; and the habit became the curse of his later life. For years he struggled against it, and struggled in vain. Under these circumstances it was not likely that he could discharge efficiently the post of Secretary, or bear with patience the restraints of duty; and so he left Malta in the autumn of 1805, and on his return homewards he visited Rome and Naples.

In 1806 he returned to England, and passed his time between his own house at Keswick and Wordsworth's house at Grasmere. His eccentric habits were now rapidly gaining ground, and making a fixed impression on his character. His life, under these conditions, was far from being a happy or satisfactory one, and his conscience was but ill at ease. It is thus he writes to the friend who had more than once come to his help in his early struggles. "Alas! you will find me the wretched wreck of what you knew me, rolling rudderless! My health is exceedingly bad; pain I have enough of; but that is indeed to me a mere trifle; but the almost unceasing, overpowering sensations of wretchedness, achings in my limbs, with an indescribable restlessness that makes action to any available purpose almost impossible; and, worst of all, the sense of blighted utility, regrets not remorseless." This was written in the year 1807. We have an account of him in the same year from the pen of De Quincey. He says: "In the summer season of 1807 I first saw this illustrious man, the largest and most spacious intellect, in my judgment, that has ever yet existed amongst men. My knowledge of his works as a most original genius began about the year 1799." Coleridge was at this time staying at Nether Stowey with Mr. Poole; and thither De Quincey, who had conceived a profound admiration for the poet and philosopher, bent his steps.

"I had received direction for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting, and in riding down a main street of Bridgwater I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing, and gazing about him, a man whom I will describe. In height he might seem to be about five feet eight (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height); his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large, and soft in their expression, and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess which mixed with their light that I recognised my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more, and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie, for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn door, and advanced close to him before he seemed apparently conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my own name, first awoke him; he started for a moment, seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation, for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but simply perplexity, and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position among daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious. The hospitable family with whom he was domesticated were distinguished for their amiable manners and enlightened understandings; they were descendants from Chubb, the philosophic writer, and bore the same name. For Coleridge they all testified deep affection and esteem—sentiments in which the whole town of Bridgwater seemed to share; for in the evening, when the heat of the day had declined, I walked out with him, and rarely, perhaps never, have I seen a person so much interrupted in one hour's space as Coleridge on this occasion by the courteous attentions of young and old."

The extreme courtesy of Coleridge, his devotion to those he loved, or who might require his sympathy, won the regard of all whom he met; and Lord Egmont and others, who felt for him an excessive admiration, were anxious that he should

undertake some great work that might furnish a sufficient arena for the display of his various and rare accomplishments. "At any rate, let him do something," said Lord Egmont, "for at present he talks very much like an angel, and does nothing at all. And what a pity," he added, "if this man were after all to vanish like an apparition, and you and I, and a few others who have witnessed his grand *bravuras* of display, were to have the usual fortune of ghost-seers, in meeting no credit for any statements that we might vouch on his behalf." In speaking of his conversation, Professor Wilson said: "He talks with a melodious richness of words, which he heaps around his images—images that are not glaring, but which are always affecting to the very verge of tears."

The restless activity of Coleridge's mind, his intellectual efforts in the paths of speculation, and the chase after abstract truths, seemed to his friends to be attempts to escape out of his own personal wretchedness. The consciousness of marvellous gifts weakened or wasted by the direful effects of opium, and his slavery to the habit, stimulated his mind to a restless activity, which found a vent in conversation. It is pitiable to read, in "The History of my own Mind for my own Improvement," of his self-reproaches; of his struggles to get rid of this thorn in the flesh; of his endeavours to free himself from the "Maëlstrom, the fatal whirlpool, to which I am drawing," he says, "just when the current was already

beyond my strength to stem." Wordsworth refers to the change wrought in his friend by "the flattering poison" in those beautiful "Lines written in my Pocket Copy of the 'Castle of Indolence.'" After the description of Coleridge's countenance, there follow the lines :

"Ah ! piteous sight it was to see this man
When he came back to us, a wither'd flow'r,
Or, like a sinful creature, pale and wan !
Down would he sit, and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour.
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower,
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay,
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away."

It was during his residence at the Lakes, and in the year 1809, that Coleridge published some essays, composed in 1807, in a periodical called the *Friend*, which he continued for some time. The *Friend*, dealing too exclusively with metaphysics, in which Coleridge delighted, came to a sudden and abrupt end through the bankruptcy of the printer. Coleridge was living as a visitor at this time at Allan Bank, Grasmere, the residence of Wordsworth. Here, surrounded by the most exquisite scenery, and turn where he would seeing nothing but beauty—beauty of hill, and stream, and lake, and dale—and living in a family endeared to him by long friendship, and by the closest sympathy with all his predilections and tastes, Coleridge might surely have been happy. What more could he want? The outward world was "as a field which the Lord hath blessed"—a

well-watered garden of the Lord ; the world within was made pleasant by congenial companionships—the voices of friends, the graciousness of woman, the innocent laughter of children. But he was far from knowing what happiness was ; all natural pleasure was poisoned at its source ; and the gloom which marked his countenance was but the shadow projected there from a conscience ill at ease. His habits were peculiar. He lived chiefly by candle-light, and sat up a great part of the night reading German books. At two or four o'clock in the afternoon he would make his first appearance downstairs. When all other lights had been put out in the quiet village of Grasmere, his lamp burnt on still ; and when man was going forth to his labour in the morning, he was about to retire to bed.

In the autumn of 1810 Coleridge left the Lakes, and never returned to them again as a resident. The causes which led him to leave these scenes of natural beauty in which he had found strength and restoration are matters of conjecture. The reason is unknown. It may be that, suffering as he was in mind and body, the sad passion exercised over him a mastery so terrible that Nature, however beautiful, had not the charm for him that she once possessed. He has himself insisted on the truth that all which we find in nature must be created by ourselves ; and this power may have now become extinct in him ; he can give nothing to nature, and therefore he can receive nothing in

return. Everyone is familiar with the beautiful lines in his "Ode to Dejection" :

" Oh, Lady ! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live.
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud !
And would we aught behold of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever anxious crowd,
Ah ! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element !"

As a personal comment on this thought we may give the lines of the preceding stanza :

" My genial spirits fail ;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast ?
It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west.
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within !"

Coleridge left the Lakes in company with Mr. Basil Montagu, who with Mrs. Montagu was returning to London from a visit to Wordsworth, and who offered his friend a seat in his travelling-carriage. For some time he remained as a guest under Mr. Montagu's friendly roof. He afterwards resided at Hammersmith with a common friend of his and Southey's, a Mr. Morgan, with whom they had formed an intimacy in Bristol. He was suffering at this time from pecuniary difficulties, which affected his health and spirits ; and such reliance had he on the kindness of friends that he

threw out the suggestion that they might purchase an annuity for him to set him free from anxiety, and enable him to pursue his literary labours. Though this was not done, efforts for his relief were not wanting; and De Quincey made him a gift of £300. It was arranged that he should deliver a course of lectures at the Royal Institution on Poetry and the Fine Arts during the ensuing winter, and for this he received a sum of one hundred guineas. The course was to extend to fifteen lectures, which were to be given on Monday and Thursday evenings successively during the winter. He was at this time living uncomfortably at the *Courier* office, in the Strand, and was a constant contributor to that journal. In such a situation, disturbed by the noise of feet passing his chamber-door continually to the printing-room of this great establishment, and with no soothing ministrations of female hands to sustain his cheerfulness (for his wife and he had separated, and she with her children resided with Southey), naturally enough his spirits flagged, and he sank more than ever under the dominion of opium. So that it often happened, when at two o'clock he should have been in the Lecture Hall of the Royal Institution, he was unable to rise from his bed. Audience after audience were dismissed with pleas of illness; and on many of the days when Albemarle Street was blocked up with carriages, intelligence was brought by the attendants to the carriage-doors that Mr. Coleridge had been

suddenly taken ill. This plea, repeated too often, and at first received with expressions of concern, began to awaken feelings of annoyance and disgust, so that many, from the uncertainty of the lecturer's appearance, ceased to attend. "Even when he did appear, his looks betrayed his condition. His lips were baked with feverish heat, and often black in colour; and in spite of the water which he continued drinking through the whole course of his lecture, he often seemed to labour under an almost paralytic inability to raise the upper jaw from the lower." Yet such was his rare intellectual power, and marvellous brilliancy of expression, that when he was himself he held his audience spell-bound by the eloquent periods that flowed in melodious cadence from his tongue. Dr. Dibdin, in his "Reminiscences of a Literary Life," says that it might be said of Coleridge, as Cowper has so happily said of Sir Philip Sidney, that he was "the warbler of poetic prose." "There was always *this* characteristic in his multifarious conversation — it was delicate, reverend, and courteous. The chastest ear could drink in no startling sound; the most serious believer never had his bosom ruffled by one sceptical or reckless assertion. Coleridge was eminently simple in his manner. Thinking and speaking were his delight; and he would sometimes seem, during the more fervid moments of discourse, to be abstracted from all and everything around and about him, and to be basking in the sunny warmth of his own

radiant imagination." "In his lectures Coleridge was brilliant, fluent, and rapid ; his words seemed to flow as from a person repeating with grace and energy some delightful poem ;" and though he lectured from notes carefully prepared, yet his audience was more delighted when, putting his notes aside, he spoke extempore, for words never failed him ; he always found the most appropriate, and they followed one another in the most logical arrangement. The attempt to take down his lectures in shorthand was a failure.*

It was during this sad period of suffering, energies depressed, and a mind ill at ease, because of his bondage to a terrible drug—his regular allowance of opium being a pint a day, though on one occasion he actually swallowed a quart—that he threw aside the cheerless doctrines of Socinianism for a truer and Scriptural creed. He had once endeavoured to reconcile the Socinian theory with an orthodox belief, but he now regarded Socinianism as a heresy subversive of Christianity ; and receiving the Bible as the

* The manuscript was almost entirely unintelligible. An accomplished and experienced shorthand-writer thus accounts for the difficulty : "With regard to every other speaker whom he had ever heard, however rapid or involved, he could always, by long experience in his art, guess the form of the latter part, or apodosis of the sentence, by the form of the beginning ; but that the conclusion of every one of Coleridge's sentences was a surprise upon him. He was obliged to listen to the last word. Yet this unexpectedness was not the effect of quaintness or confusion of construction ; it was the uncommonness of the thoughts, or the image, which prevented you from anticipating the end."

Word of God, and accepting the fall and corruption of man as doctrines of revelation, he looked at Christ's atonement as the only hope of the sinner, and proclaimed without hesitation that Christ was God as well as man. He acknowledged in all humility, and with the frankness of true wisdom, that "there are truths revealed to us, of which the Trinity was one, lost in darkness to us, because our eyes cannot penetrate the depths of the skies; we receive them, not because they can be made clear to our apprehension, but because the Scriptures expressly state them. It is impossible for any man to read the New Testament with the uncommon exercise of an unbiased understanding, without being convinced of the Divinity of Christ from the testimony of almost every page." "Socinianism," he says, "is not a religion, but a theory: pernicious, because it excludes all our deep and awful ideas of the perfect holiness of God, His justice and His mercy, etc.; unsatisfactory, for it promises forgiveness, without any solution of the difficulty of the compatibility of this with the justice of God."*

* When referring to the religious opinions of Coleridge, we must not omit to say that he was one of the first in this country to put forth a theory of inspiration as unsatisfactory as it was bold. In his "Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit," published after his death, he spoke of the Bible as a library of infinite value, as that which must have a Divine Spirit in it, from its appeal to all the hidden springs of feeling in our hearts. But, then, he protests against what he calls "Bibliolatry," "the doctrine which requires me to believe that not only what finds me, but all that exists in the same volume, and which I am bound to find therein, was not only inspired

We find Coleridge in the midst of all his literary and social successes struggling still against his besetting sin; now entreating his friends to place him in the asylum of Dr. Fox, that, treated as a madman, he might be cured; and now resolving to place himself where he could "remain a month or two, wholly in the power of others"; "for my

by, that is, composed by men under the actuating influence of the Holy Spirit, but likewise dictated by an Infallible Intelligence; that the writers, each and all, were divinely informed, as well as inspired." Such a doctrine, he conceives, must imply infallibility in physical science and in everything else as much as in faith, in things natural no less than in spiritual. He expresses a full belief "that the word of the Lord came to Samuel, to Isaiah, and to others, and that the words which gave utterance to the same are faithfully recorded." But for the recording he does not think there was need of any supernatural working, except in such cases as those in which God not only utters certain express words to a prophet, but also enjoins him to record them. In the latter case he accepts them "as supernaturally communicated, and their recording as executed under special guidance." We need not say that the views of Coleridge are far from satisfactory to those who believe, as we do, that the Scriptures are the revelations through human media of the infinite mind of God to the finite mind of man, and who recognising, as we do, both a human and a Divine element in the written Word, are convinced that the Holy Ghost was so breathed into the mind of the writer, so illumined his spirit, and pervaded his thoughts, that while nothing that individualized him as a man was taken away, everything that was necessary to enable him to declare Divine Truth in all its fulness was bestowed and superadded. Not only did the writers, under the influence of the Spirit, reveal the rule and counsel of God, declare facts, and make statements, but they also made choice of such expressions, and words of speech, as were most calculated to convey and commend the Truth. This, it will be seen, is very different from the theory of Coleridge, who apparently draws no distinction between the inspiration of holy men of old, and the inspiration of the poet and the teacher in every age and nation.

case is a species of madness, only that it is a derangement, an utter impotence of the volition, and not of the intellectual faculties." "I have prayed," he says in a letter to a friend, alluding to the fierceness of his conflict with his sin—"I have prayed with drops of agony on my brow." He draws the following picture of himself: "Conceive a poor, miserable wretch, who for many years has been attempting to beat off pain by a constant recurrence to a vice which reproduces it; conceive a spirit in hell, employed in tracing out for others the road to that heaven from which his crimes exclude him; in short, conceive whatever is most wretched, helpless, and hopeless, and you will form as tolerable a notion of my state as it is possible for a good man to have."

In the spring of 1816 he placed himself in the home of Mr. Gillman, a physician, and here he passed the last eighteen years of his life, during which years he wrote but little. Though he was gradually set free from the bondage of an ensnaring vice, and his conscience, no longer clouded by vicious indulgence, was at rest through the faith which he had sought with many tears, yet his health was permanently injured by the tremendous effects of taking opium. Though his intellect was clear, his mind never recovered its vigour or energy; and while still pursuing his philosophical and literary labours, yet he never regained the capacity or strength necessary to undertake a continuous work. "Christabel," after lying long

in manuscript, was printed in 1816, three editions of it appearing in one year; and in the next year Coleridge published a collection of his chief poems, under the title of "Sibylline Leaves," in allusion, as he says, "to the fragmentary and wildly-scattered state in which they had been long suffered to remain." His "Lay Sermons" were written in 1816-17, and in 1818 he delivered the Lectures on Poetry which have been already referred to; but the first really collective edition of his "Poetical and Dramatic Works" was published in the year 1828, in three volumes arranged by himself. A third and more complete issue of his works, arranged by another hand, appeared in 1834, the year of his death. He to the last retained his marvellous powers of conversation.*

* It is thus that a Quarterly Reviewer speaks of him in the later period of his life: "Mr. Coleridge's conversation, it is true, has not now all the brilliant versatility of his former years; yet we know not whether the contrast between his bodily weakness and his mental power does not leave a deeper and a more solemnly affecting impression than his most triumphant displays in youth could ever have done. To see the pain-stricken countenance relax, and the contracted frame dilate under the kindling of intellectual fire alone; to watch the infirmities of the flesh shrinking out of sight, or glorified and transfigured in the brightness of the awakening spirit, is an awful object of contemplation; and in no other person did we ever witness such a distinction—nay, aberration of mind from body—such a mastery of the purely intellectual over the purely corporeal, as in the instance of this remarkable man. Even now his conversation is characterized by all the essentials of its former excellence, there is the same individuality, the same *unexpectedness*, the same universal grasp; nothing is too high, nothing too low for it; it glances from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth, with a speed and a splendour, an ease and a power, which almost seems inspired."—*Quarterly Review*, vol. lii., p. 3.

In July, 1834, in his sixty-second year, Coleridge entered into rest. He had been long separated by distance from the companions of his early days. The friends with whom he had at one time been closely connected, and who had many things in common, who were bound together in the bonds of a common sympathy with nature as well as literature, continued to cherish for him an affectionate regard. This was shown by the manner in which Wordsworth received, in the Westmorland which they both loved, the news that Coleridge had fallen asleep in peace at Highgate. The Rev. Robert Perceval Graves, in writing to a friend, says :

"The death of Coleridge was announced to us by his friend Wordsworth. He then continued to speak of him ; called him the most *wonderful* man that he had ever known, wonderful for the originality of his mind, and the power he possessed of throwing out in profusion grand central truths from which might be evolved the most comprehensive systems. Wordsworth, as a poet, regretted that German metaphysics had so much captivated the taste of Coleridge, for he was frequently not intelligible on this subject ; whereas, if his energy and his originality had been more exerted in the channel of poetry—an instrument of which he had so perfect a mastery—Wordsworth thought he might have done more permanently to enrich the literature, and to influence the thought of the nation, than any man of the age."

The letter of Henry Nelson Coleridge, which conveyed the tidings of his great relation's death, and the manner of it, adds Mr. Graves, was read to us :

"It appeared that his death was a relief from intense pain, which, however, subsided at the interval of a few days before

the event, and that shortly after this cessation of agony he fell into a comatose state. The most interesting part of the letter was the statement that the last use he made of his faculties was to call his children, and other relatives and friends, around him to give them his blessing, and to express his hope to them that the manner of his end might manifest the depth of his trust in his Saviour, Christ. As I heard this, I was at once deeply glad at the substance, and deeply affected by Wordsworth's emotion in reading it. When he came to this part his voice at first faltered, and then broke ; but soon divine faith that the change was a blest one overcame aught of human grief, and he concluded in an equable though subdued tone."

So Coleridge, Poet, Psychologist, Moralist, Philosopher, and Christian, passed to his rest, thankful for the deep, calm peace of mind which he enjoyed ; a peace such as he had never before experienced, or scarcely hoped for ; this, he said, seemed now settled upon him ; and all things were thus looked at by him through an atmosphere by which all were reconciled and harmonized. We may appropriately conclude this sketch of his life with the lines called " My Baptismal Birthday " :

" God's child in Christ adopted,—Christ my all,—
What that earth boasts were not lost cheaply, rather
Than forfeit that blest name by which I call
The Holy One, the Almighty God, my Father?—
Father ! in Christ we live, and Christ in thee—
Eternal Thou, and everlasting we.

" The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear not death :
In Christ I live ! in Christ I draw the breath
Of the true life !—Let then earth, sea, and sky
Make war against me ! On my front I show
Their mighty master's seal. In vain they try
To end my life, that can but end its woe.—
Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies?—
Yes ! but not his—'tis Death itself there dies."

In turning to speak of his poems in what space is yet allowed to us, we may notice the sweetness of his versification, and the natural melody of the words he employs to express his thoughts. Mrs. Barrett Browning in her "Vision of Poets" thus speaks of him :

" And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the blue."

He seems to have had an inborn sense of music which never can be acquired by any effort of art, and which made him by natural right a singer, so that he attempted every kind of lyric measure, whether rhymed or not, with the most perfect success. He has also written poems in the heroic couplet, and in blank verse which satisfies the ear of all who delight in harmony which is the result of rhythmical construction. The best poems of Coleridge are distinguished in a remarkable degree by that consummate harmony which is a natural gift, as well as by that metrical arrangement which is the fruit of uncommon labour and skill. It is evident that he must have studied the laws and properties of metre with the utmost attention and care. His poetry is what Milton said poetry ought to be, "simple, sensuous, impassioned"; and his imagery, ever distinct and clear, is fitted to carry out the poet's intention of awaking in the reader's mind the same mood which coloured the spirit of his own thoughts. In the wild and romantic poem of "Christabel"—that magnifi-

cent fragment—with what singular skill the reader is made to see and to hear the various sights and sounds which the poet narrates with such power and distinction! The reader is under a spell as he hears at midnight the striking of the castle clock, and the “Tu-whit! Tu-who!” of the owl, and the short, low howl of the sleeping mastiff; and as he sees the dim forest in the chilly night, and the lonely Lady Christabel, as she steals through the wood to pray “for the weal of her lover so far away,” and suddenly, at the other side of the oak, observes a lady richly clad, and “beautiful exceedingly.” What pictures pass before the eye—the sudden flash of the dying brands, as Christabel and Geraldine pass through the echoing hall, the carved chamber:

“Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver’s brain
For a lady’s chamber meet :
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel’s feet.”

And then the struggle between Geraldine and the spirit of Christabel’s sainted mother; the weaving of the spell, and the discovery of her hideous form as Geraldine drops her silken robe and inner vest :

“A sight to dream of, not to tell,
O shield her, shield sweet Christabel !
Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs :
Ah ! what a stricken look was hers !”

And what a relief at the ceasing of the spell, and as the joyousness of the birds is described, and the awaking of Christabel as from a trance—all

this and more powerfully affects the imagination, and if he had written nothing else would have placed him in the ranks of our greatest poets.

The description of the change which takes place in Geraldine from her assumed to her natural form, when read to some friends at Lord Byron's, is said to have caused Shelley to faint.

“A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy.
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice and more of dread
At Christabel she look'd askance !
One moment—and the sight was fled !
But Christabel, in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground,
Shuddered aloud with a hissing sound ;
And Geraldine again turn'd round,
And like a thing that sought relief,
Full of wonder, and full of grief,
She rolled her large bright eyes divine
Wildly on Sir Leoline.
The maid, alas ! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees—no sight but one !”

With regard to the sweetness of the versification of the poem there can be but one opinion. The first part was composed in 1797—the *annus mirabilis* of this great man—when he was in his best and strongest health, and when the works on which his poetic fame will rest were composed or planned.

The weird poem of “The Ancient Mariner” also displays the poet's mastery of the wild and preternatural, and is one of the most perfect pieces of imaginative poetry in our own or any other language. It is a poem in which sublimity

is allied to terror. And how full of the sweetest music are many of its stanzas ! For example :

“ Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing,
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning !

“ And now ’twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute,
And now it is an angel’s song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

“ It ceased ; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.”

It is by these two poems, “The Ancient Mariner” and “Christabel,” that Coleridge is most widely known ; and many of his most exquisite pieces are but little read, not even that wonderful dream-poem “Kubla Khan,” of which Mr. Swinburne speaks in language so eloquent and picturesque, but which to many will seem exaggerated. “The Christabel,” the “Kubla Khan,” with one or two more, are outside all law and jurisdiction of ours. When it has been said that such melodies were never heard, such dreams never dreamed, such speech never spoken, the chief thing remains unsaid, and unspeakable. There is a charm upon these poems which can only be felt in silent submission of wonder. Every separate line has its own heavenly beauty, but to cite separate lines is intolerable. They are to be received in a rapture of silence—such a silence as

Chapman describes; silence like a God "peaceful and young," which

"Left so free mine ears,
That I might hear the music of the spheres,
And all the angels singing out of heaven."*

They who confine themselves to these three poems of pure imagination are great losers, for there are other poems of his distinguished, some by philosophical reflection, some by deep pathos, and others, like the grand "Hymn in the Vale of Chamouni," inspired not only by the glory of external nature, but by the hidden fire of strong devotional feelings which lifted the soul to God. This poem, which has excited much discussion, is an expansion of a poem of twenty lines by Frederica Brun. It is to all intents and purposes a new poem; a new creation; a glorification of the original. It has been said that it was a sentiment of propriety, and not of inspiration, that led Coleridge to give a religious turn to his lines, and that propriety is a bad guide in poetry; but with this criticism we cannot agree. There is no feigned enthusiasm in this magnificent hymn; its inspiration is not simply derived from the beauty of flowers and waters, stars and sunsets, the mountain and the glacier; not simply from the majesty of Nature, but from the majesty of Nature's God. No! He describes the glories of external nature, "the silent sea of pines"; the bald and awful head of Sovran Blanc, "visited all

* 'Enthymiaë Raptus; The Tears of Peace' (1609).

night by troops of stars"; the "wild torrents fiercely glad"; the dark and icy caverns; the ice-falls; the enormous ravines; the sky-pointing peaks—for the sake of lifting up the soul to God. The invocation summoning all creation to praise its Author is the crown and climax of the poem.

"Into the depth of clouds, that veil thy breast,
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low
In adoration, upward from thy base
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,
To rise before me—Rise, O ever rise,
Rise like a cloud of incense, from the Earth:
Thou kingly Spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God."

"Genevieve" is one of Coleridge's best-known and most beautiful pieces. It is a song of triumphant "Love"—love as pure as it is ardent, as gentle as it is impassioned, and full of a chivalrous tenderness and courtesy. It is musical throughout. It begins:

"All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of love,
And feed his sacred flame."

The eminent critic, Mr. H. D. Traill, in his monograph on Coleridge in "The English Men of Letters," hardly does justice to this lovely poem. He says, indeed, that "the lines are remarkable for a certain strange fascination of melody," and that "they are noteworthy also, as perhaps the

fullest expression of the almost womanly softness of Coleridge's nature"; but he winds up his criticism with this judgment: "Beautiful as the verses are, we cannot but feel that they only escape the 'namby-pamby' by the breadth of a hair." I much prefer, and entirely agree with, the judgment of another critic when speaking of this, and the other love poems of Coleridge. His love "is a clear, unclouded passion, made up of an exquisite respect and gentleness, a knightly tenderness and courtesy; pure yet ardent, impatient yet contemplative. It is Petrarch and Shakespeare incorporate; it is the midsummer moonlight of all love poetry." It must be confessed, however, that Mr. Swinburne says his "Love" has not attained to that strength and solidity of beauty which was his special gift at last. For melody rather than for harmony it is perfect; but in this *cœnomel* there is as yet more of honey than of wine. But yet another poet, Sir Walter Scott, gives it as his opinion, in one of his charming letters, that Coleridge's "verses on Love are among the most beautiful in the English language." Some of its stanzas linger almost unconsciously on the memory.

Many of Coleridge's poems are marked by a strain of impassioned contemplation, combined with philosophical expression, such as we find in the "Ode to Dejection," from which some lines have been quoted in an earlier part of this sketch. It is a poem less known than it ought to be, and

in it we find not only philosophical reflection, but also a deep and tender pathos. "France: an Ode," a political poem, inspired by an indignant reaction against his own earlier sympathies with the French Republic, and full of strong national feeling, has some fine stanzas. The first is especially worthy of remembrance.

"Ye clouds ! that far above me float and pause,
Whose pathless march no mortal may control !
Ye ocean-waves ! that wheresoe'er ye roll,
Yield homage only to eternal laws !
Ye woods, that listen to the night-birds singing
Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined
Save when your own imperious branches swinging
Have made a solemn music of the wind !
Where like a man beloved of God,
Through glooms which never woodman trod,
How oft pursuing fancies holy,
My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
Inspired beyond the guess of folly
By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound !
O ye loud waves, and O ye forests high !
And O ye clouds that far above me soared !
Thou rising sun ! thou blue rejoicing sky !
Yea, everything that is and will be free !
Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
With what deep worship I have still adored
The spirit of divinest liberty."

Another political poem in which his love for England is eloquently expressed, and in which we have some beautiful and living descriptions of natural objects, is one called "Fears in Solitude." It was "written in 1798, during the alarm of an invasion." We have as a background to the poet's fears :

"A green and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell ! O'er stiller place
No singing skylark ever poised himself."

He contrasts the national agitation and alarm with the quiet and peace of nature :

“ The dell,
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As vernal cornfield, or the unripe flax
When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
The level sunshine glimmers with green light,
Oh ! 'tis a quiet, spirit-healing nook ! ”

Coleridge was associated with what has been called “ The Lake School,” not only in political sentiment, but in its reaction from the formal and mechanical poetry of Pope, and the old French School of Poetry ; in its love of Nature, in its discernment of the spiritual in the material, and in its sympathy with the animal world.

But we must not linger on a poet who has been called “ the most imaginative poet since Milton ” —a poet distinguished by sympathetic vision, and whose verses overflow with harmony. We cannot speak of his tragedies, “ Remorse ” and “ Zopolya,” the latter not found in every edition of the poet’s works, but each embracing the pastoral and romantic, and containing situations of grand dramatic interest.

His translation of Schiller’s magnificent drama of “ Wallenstein,” which has always been considered as one of the most remarkable productions of Coleridge’s pen, is a unique performance, and has all the charm of an original work. It is as closely connected with the translator’s poetic fame as the “ Iliad ” with Pope, and the “ Æneid ” with Dryden, and is superior to both in its

faithfulness to the original. Indeed, many parts of the translation are exclusively the property of the English poet, who used a manuscript copy of the German text before its publication by the author; and it is a curious anecdote in literature, that Schiller in more instances than one afterwards adopted the hints, and translated in turn the interpolations of his own translator.*

But we must send the reader to the works of Coleridge for poems which cannot but charm the fancy, please the ear, and delight the taste, such as "An Ode to the Departing Year;" "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison;" "To William Wordsworth;" "Time: Real and Imaginary;" and "The Nightingale: a Conversation Poem." In this latter poem he contests the idea that the nightingale is a bird

"Most musical, most melancholy,"

and saying that "in nature there is nothing melancholy" (a sentiment which, however, we dispute), has the following beautiful lines:

"'Tis the merry nightingale
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,
As he were fearful that an April night
Would be too short for him to utter forth
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul
Of all its music!"

This tribute to one of England's greatest poets may be fittingly brought to a close by some lines

* *Quarterly Review*, vol. lii., p. 18.

from "A Tombless Epitaph," which form a portrait of the poet himself:

"Sickness, 'tis true,
Whole years of weary days besieged him close,
Even to the gates and inlets of his life !
But it is true, no less, that strenuous, firm,
And with a natural gladness, he maintained
The citadel unconquered, and in joy
Was strong to follow the delightful muse.
For not a hidden path, that to the shades
Of the Parnassian forest leads,
Lurked undiscovered by him ; not a rill
There issues from the fount of Hippocrene,
But he traced it upwards to its source.
Through open glade, dark glen, and secret dell,
Knew the gay wild-flowers on its banks, and cull'd
Its med'cinable herbs. Yea, oft alone,
Piercing the long-neglected holy cave,
The haunt obscure of old Philosophy.
He bade with lifted torch its starry walls
Sparkle, as erst they sparkled to the flame
Of odorous lamps tended by Saint and Sage.
O framed for calmer times and nobler hearts !
O studious Poet, eloquent for truth !
Philosopher ! contemning wealth and death,
Yet docile, childlike, full of Life and Love !"

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

- "The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed ;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude,
- "In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart—
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.
- "But he is weak, both Man and Boy,
Hath been an idler in the land ;
Contented if he might enjoy
The things which others understand."

IN these verses Wordsworth, at an early period of his career, describes himself as one to whom the loveliness of Nature was a revelation. To him Nature was an inspiration. He had sympathy alike with its grandeur, its awfulness, its beauty. "To me," he says :

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

From the poet himself we learn something of his early history :

"I was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on April 7, 1770, the second son of John Wordsworth, attorney-at-law—as lawyers of this class were then called—and law-agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. My

mother was Anne, only daughter of William Cookson, mercer, of Penrith, and of Dorothy, born Crackanthorp, of the ancient family of that name, who from the times of Edward III. had lived in Newbiggen Hall, Westmorland. My grandfather was the first of the name of Wordsworth who came into Westmorland, where he purchased the small estate of Stockbridge. He was descended from a family who had been settled at Peniston, in Yorkshire, near the sources of the Don, probably before the Norman Conquest. Their names appear on different occasions in all the transactions, personal and public, connected with that parish; and I possess, through the kindness of Colonel Beaumont, an alms, made in 1525, at the expense of a William Wordsworth, as is expressed in a Latin inscription carved upon it, which carries the pedigree of the family back four generations from himself. The time of my infancy and early boyhood was passed partly at Cockermouth, and partly with my mother's parents at Penrith, where my mother, in the year 1778, died of a decline, brought on by a cold, in consequence of being put, at a friend's house in London, in what used to be called 'a best bedroom.' My father never recovered his usual cheerfulness of mind after this loss, and died when I was in my fourteenth year, a school-boy just returned from Hawkshead, whither I had been sent with my elder brother Richard in my ninth year.

“I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nose-gay to my breast when I was going to say the Catechism in the church, as was customary before Easter. An intimate friend of hers told me that she once said to her that the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious was William, and he, she said, would be remarkable either for good or for evil. The cause of this was that I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper, so much so that I remember going once into the attics of my grandfather's house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with an intention of destroying myself with one of the foils, which I knew was kept there. I took the foil in hand, but my heart failed. Upon another occasion, while I was at my grandfather's house at Penrith, along with my eldest brother Richard, we were whipping tops together in the large drawing-room, on which the carpet was only laid down upon particular occasions. The walls were hung round with family pictures, and I said to my brother, ‘Dare you strike your whip through that old lady's petticoat?’ He replied, ‘No, I won't.’ ‘Then,’ said I, ‘here goes!’ and I struck my lash through her hooped petticoat, for which, no doubt, though I have forgotten it, I was properly punished. But possibly, from some want of judgment in punishments inflicted, I had become perverse and obstinate in defying chastisement, and rather proud of it than otherwise.

“Of my earliest days at school I have little to say, but that they were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty then, and in the vacations, to read whatever works I liked. For example, I read all Fielding’s works, ‘Don Quixote,’ ‘Gil Blas,’ and any part of Swift that I liked, ‘Gulliver’s Travels’ and the ‘Tale of a Tub’ being both much to my taste. It may be, perhaps, as well to mention that the first verses which I wrote were a task imposed by my master; the subject, ‘The Summer Vacation’; and of my own accord I added others upon ‘The Return to School.’ There was nothing remarkable in either poem, but I was called upon, among other scholars, to write verses upon the completion of the second centenary from the foundation of the school in 1585 by Archbishop Sandys. These verses were much admired—far more than they deserved, for they were but a tame imitation of Pope’s versification, and a little in his style.”

There is nothing in these passages about his school-days, but at eight years old he was sent to the Grammar School at Hawkshead, a secluded town close to Esthwaite Water; and here, in the neighbourhood of wood and water, mountain and crag, “the fair seed-time of his soul was passed.”

Through the kindness and liberality of his two uncles, Richard Wordsworth and Christopher Crackanthorp (under whose care he and his brothers were placed at their father’s death in 1783), the poet went up in 1787, as an under-

graduate, to St. John's College, Cambridge. His first long vacation was spent among his old haunts at Hawkshead under the shadow of the green hills that rise in beauty near. He knew all the country round: the grassy knolls; the silver falls; the towering mountains, all "beautifully formed and richly adorned by the hand of Nature." In his second long vacation we find him at Penrith with his sister, where he met the woman, then but a girl, who introduced a new joy into his life, and who was afterwards to become his wife, and give gladness to his home for many years. His third long vacation he spent in a walking tour in Switzerland, and made acquaintance with the sublime scenery of a country surpassed by none in Europe for its grandeur; but while he admired the majesty of its mountains lifting up their glittering peaks to heaven, and the loveliness of its glorious lakes, he still returned with undiminished admiration to the beauty of his own hills and rivulets and tarns.

In the January of 1791 he took his B.A. degree, and left Cambridge without any decided purpose as to the profession he should embrace. "He did not feel himself," he said in after-years, "good enough for the Church; he felt that his mind was not properly disciplined for that holy office, and that the struggle between his conscience and his impulses would have made life a torture. He also shrank from the Law. He had studied military history with great interest, with the strategy of

war ; and he always fancied that he had talents for command. He at one time thought of a military life ; but then he was without connections, and he felt if he were ordered to the West Indies his talents would not save him from the yellow fever, and he gave that up." He went to London, and lived there for a time, without any definite aim. His means were small, his acquaintances few, and his time was mainly spent in wandering through the streets of the Great City. Nor were his rambles all barren. The poet can not only draw inspiration from scenes of beauty and grandeur, from mountain and lake, from groves of forest trees where "Philomel still deigns a song," but also from those splendid structures of stone raised by the hands of men to the glory of God, and in

"That branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells,
Lingering, and wandering on, as loth to die—
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality."

Because his poet heart saw the mystery, the awe, the strangeness of the Great City, he has given us the noble "Sonnet on Westminster Bridge," in which London is seen in the clear light of the early morning, and in the solemn silence of the sleeping city :

"Earth hath not anything to show more fair ;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty :
This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning : silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields and to the sky ;

All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill ;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will.
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
And all that mighty heart is lying still."

Wordsworth went to France in the November of 1791, passed through Calais, and proceeded to Paris, and thence to Blois, spending nearly a year between the two places. These were the days of the Revolution, and his heart burned with sympathy in a cause which he believed to be the cause of freedom and humanity. But his hopes were soon met with disappointment ; the Reign of Terror, the massacres of September, 1792, the guillotine, and the Revolutionary Tribunal, brought with them dismay and disappointment, and he returned to England towards the end of the year. But his absorbing interest in the ideas and events of the French Revolution, a period when to him

" The whole earth
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
The budding rose above the rose full blown,"

"had," in the words of Matthew Arnold, "the effect upon him which great interruptions of the common course of things and life have on powerful natures." They were a call and a strain on his intellect and will, first in taking them in, then in judging, sifting, accepting or refusing them, which drew forth to the full all that he had of strength and individual character.

In 1795 Wordsworth settled with his sister at

Racedown, near Crewkerne, and devoted himself to poetry. He finished a gloomy poem called "Guilt and Sorrow," and wrote a tragedy called "The Borderers," but with little success. He had already, in 1791, published two little poems, "The Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches," which attracted the admiration of Coleridge, but contained faint promise of his future excellence. His first work of merit was "The Ruined Cottage," which was afterwards incorporated in the first book of "The Excursion."

In 1797 the poet and his sister removed to Alfoxden, a large house in Somersetshire, near Netherstowey, where Coleridge was at that time living. Two years after this date the first volume of "The Lyrical Ballads" appeared at Bristol, published by Mr. Cottle, the joint work of Coleridge and Wordsworth, but to which Coleridge only contributed his weird and wonderful poem, "The Ancient Mariner," and two or three other pieces. The volume concluded with that poem of power and splendour which appeals to thought and imagination, and opens the eyes to see what is greatest and highest in Nature, the "Lines written above Tintern Abbey." When this volume was published, Wordsworth and his sister went to Grasmere, and spent the winter at Goslar, where he wrote "Lucy Gray," "Ruth," and "Nutting," "The Poet's Epitaph," with other poems also of much force and originality of thought, full of vividness of description, and richness of diction.

When he returned to England, he made his home amongst the mountains and lakes of his own Northern land, and settled with his sister at Grasmere; and in 1800 published the second volume of the "Lyrical Ballads." On October 4, 1802, he married Miss Mary Hutchinson, of Penrith, and this put the crown on his happiness, for in her, who was his first love, he found a wife to appreciate his genius, and who herself had much of the poetic faculty. Two of the most beautiful lines in the poem "The Daffodils" were of her suggestion :

"They flash upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude."

She was in every sense of the word a true helpmeet, a companion "dearer far than life and light are dear," and able in his steep march to uphold him to the end.

Miss Wordsworth continued to live with them, and though friends were few and books not many, and the life was uneventful, yet through "plain living and high thinking," and because of its very simplicity, no home could have been happier than this secluded cottage at Grasmere. It was not only in its outward, but in its inward aspect, "beautiful exceedingly."

A tour in Scotland in August, 1803, inspired Wordsworth with some of his most popular poems. Among these are "The Highland Girl," written soon after his return to the Lakes; "The Three Cottage Girls," not written till nearly

twenty years afterwards ; and the beautiful poem to his wife, " She was a Phantom of Delight," all of which commemorated the exceeding loveliness of a Highland girl whom he met on the shores of Loch Lomond.

The year 1805, which in the death of John Wordsworth, a brother very dear to him, brought a shadow on his home, also threw into mourning the whole English nation. Nelson, in the hour of victory, and on his ship *Victory*, was slain in the battle of Trafalgar ; and Wordsworth mourned with his country over the loss of its national and ideal hero. The noble and impassioned sonnets " To Liberty," begun in 1802, were written from time to time through the years till 1816, and breathe the very spirit of patriotism and honour, admiration and indignant scorn.

In the spring of 1808 Wordsworth, who had now three sons and two daughters, removed from Townend to Allan Bank, a more roomy house at the north side of Grasmere, and thence for a time, in 1811, to the Parsonage. And now came family sorrows. His daughter Catherine, whose picture he gives in the little poem beginning " Loving she is, and tractable, though wild," died in 1812 ; and her brother Thomas did not long survive her. The father, whose grief for these children was profound, feeling the impossibility of remaining in a house filled with such sorrowful memories, and standing so close to the churchyard where his loved ones lay, moved to Rydal Mount, which became

vacant at this moment, in the spring of 1813. Rydal Mount was a fit home for the poet. It is situated under the purple shadows of Fairfield, and sheltered by many a stately and branching fir, and in front, in the far distance, lie the silver waters of the queen of lakes, fair Windermere. The garden was described by Bishop Christopher Wordsworth immediately after his uncle's death, when every terrace-walk and flowering alley spoke of the poet's loving care. He tells of "the tall ash-tree, in which a thrush has sung, for hours together, during many years;" of the "laburnum in which the osier cage of the doves was hung;" of the stone steps, "in the interstices of which grow the yellow flowering poppy and the wild geranium, or Poor Robin,

"Gay

With his red stalks upon a sunny day."

And then of the terraces—one levelled for Miss Fenwick's use, and welcome to himself in aged years; and one ascending, and leading to the "far terrace" on the mountain's side, where the poet was wont to murmur his verses as they came.

In March, 1813, he was appointed, through Lord Lonsdale's interest, to the distributorship of stamps for the county of Westmoreland, to which office the same post for Cumberland was afterwards added. This post he resigned without a retiring pension, and it was conferred on his son.

In July, 1820, he made, with his wife and sister, and two or three other friends, a tour through Switzerland and Italy, which was the source of a good deal of poetry. In later years he travelled in Holland and North Wales, making another excursion in Belgium with Coleridge, and in 1829 he went to Ireland with his friend Mr. Marshall. He paid a visit with his daughter to Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, before the departure of the latter to seek health in Italy, and feeling that Scott might never again cross the Tweed, he expressed his feelings in the beautiful sonnet beginning :

“A trouble, not of clouds, but weeping rain.”

He travelled again in Scotland in 1833, and in 1837 made a long tour in Italy with Crabb Robinson. He published in 1842 a volume called “Poems chiefly of Early and Latter Years,” and among them various additions to the “Ecclesiastical Sketches,” a series of sonnets begun in 1821, but which he continued to enlarge, devoting to them the energies of his later years.

Sorrows now came treading on one another's heels. In 1832 his sister had a serious illness, which, when the physical symptoms abated, left her with an “intellect painfully impaired, and her bright nature permanently overclouded.” In 1834 Coleridge, whom Wordsworth calls “the most wonderful man he had ever known,” passed away, and his brother-poet and friend felt his loss

keenly. Two years afterwards came the death of Sarah Hutchinson, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, and long an inmate of Wordsworth's home.

And now, when the inner circle of friends and relations is beginning to pass away, and the outer circle of admirers to spread rapidly, we will pause in the story of his life to consider his eminence as a poet.

There is no poet about whom there has been such an ebb and flow of opinion as Wordsworth. There is none who has had more passionate and indiscriminating worship from his admirers, and there is none who has been more coldly treated by the general public, or more insolently by reviewers. No poet ever took detraction and envy with more dignity and self-reliance. No attacks ever provoked a rejoinder. He met all with a dignified silence. Popularity is no test of merit. Was not Keats received with shouts of derision? It must be admitted that Wordsworth has never been what may be called a popular poet, winning the suffrages of all ranks and ages and of all classes and conditions of mind. He has had his rises and falls in the estimation of the people, who, after all, are the final court of appeal as to what constitutes popularity. The cultured critic may decry the public taste; yet it is public taste that sets its stamp on the things which are to live or die. It is not that which pleases the critic in his study, and which from his chair he pronounces to be good work, of intellectual ability and spiritual

purpose, that is crowned with success; but that which stirs the great heart of the nation, and whose breathing thoughts and burning words inspire men with the patriot's courage or the martyr's zeal. Wordsworth has never been popular as Shakespeare is popular, or as Scott and Byron are popular, or as Burns and Tennyson are popular. The estimation in which he has been held has waxed and waned, and waxed and waned again and again. Mr. Matthew Arnold, in the preface to his delightful "Selection of the Poems of Wordsworth"—a volume which, as the compiler says, "contains everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him"—says that "Wordsworth has never, either before or since, been so accepted and so popular, so established in possession of the minds of all who profess to care for poetry, as he was between the years 1830 and 1840, and at Cambridge. From the very first, no doubt, he had his believers and witnesses. But I have myself heard him declare that, for he knew not how many years, his poetry had never brought him in enough to buy his shoe-strings. The poetry-reading public was very slow to recognise him, and was very easily drawn away from him. Scott effaced him with this public, Byron effaced him." We learn from the biography of the poet that between the years 1807 and 1815 there was not one edition of his works sold. He was sneered

at in the Reviews. Jeffrey lashed him with his satire. Byron tried to annihilate him in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." All remember his well-known contemptuous lines—

"A drowsy, frowsy poem, called the Excursion,
Writ in a manner which is my aversion."

When Cottle, a Bristol bookseller, made offers of his stock to the Messrs. Longmans, and an inventory was made of the several volumes, there was one book noted down as worth nothing. This was a volume of the "Lyrical Poems of Wordsworth." Though Cottle had only ventured on an edition of five hundred copies, yet the greater part remained unsold. We have seen how, nothing daunted by this want of success, Wordsworth published a second volume, and although it contained not only his justly celebrated lines on "Revisiting Tintern Abbey," but also Coleridge's weird poem of "The Ancient Mariner," yet the book met with no encouragement. The death of Byron, and the dedication of Scott's genius to the novel, gave Wordsworth an opportunity of catching the ear of all to whom poetry is a pleasure; but his growth in general favour was gradual and slow. He never, on one particular morning, "awoke to find himself famous," as did the poet of "Childe Harold." When Tennyson dawned as a new star in the poetic firmament, and by his perfect literary form, his melodious measures, his exceeding beauty and

sweetness, as well as by the great human interest which of itself lends an incomparable charm to his poems, gained the public ear, Wordsworth seemed to decline. But only for a time—again his genius was recognised.

One of the first manifestations of another change in public feeling, and the prelude to a more general recognition of his greatness, was the honorary degree of D.C.L. conferred on him by the University of Oxford in the summer of 1839. Keble, as Professor of Poetry, "introduced him in words of admiring reverence," to quote the words of Mr. Myers; "and the enthusiasm of the audience was such as had never been evoked in that place before, except on the occasion of the visit of the Duke of Wellington." The collocation was an interesting one. The special claim advanced for Wordsworth by Keble, in his Latin oration, was that "he had shed a celestial light upon the affections, the occupations, the piety of the poor."

In October, 1842, Sir Robert Peel, as Prime Minister, gave him another token of the estimation in which he was held by bestowing on him an annuity of £300 from the Civil List for distinguished literary merit; and when Southey died, in March, 1843, he was offered the office of Poet Laureate, in a letter from Earl de la Warr, the Lord Chamberlain. This he at first respectfully declined, but he was afterwards induced to accept the office on a repeated request from the

Lord Chamberlain, and influenced, no doubt, by a letter from Sir Robert Peel, who gave expression to the national feeling in the matter.

“The offer (writes Sir Robert) was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain with my entire concurrence, not for the purpose of imposing on you any onerous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets. The Queen entirely approved of the nomination, and there is one unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal (and it is pretty generally known) that there could not be a question about the selection. Do not be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing required from you. But as the Queen can select for this honourable appointment no one whose claims for respect and honour, on account of eminence as a poet, can be placed in competition with yours, I trust you will not longer hesitate to accept it.”

Of late years the hold of the poet on the world has strengthened; his works are more widely read and appreciated than ever they have been, and his name is constantly before the public. A school of “Wordsworthians” has sprung up, who regard with equal love and reverence everything the poet has written, and who see the same beauty in “Peter Bell” and the “Thanksgiving Ode” as in “Michael” and the “Solitary Reaper.” Mr. Matthew Arnold, a most discriminating critic, and far from being “a Wordsworthian” in the sense just spoken of, pronounces him to be “one of the very chief glories of English poetry.” “I firmly believe,” he says, “that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and

Milton—of which all the world now recognises the worth—undoubtedly the most considerable in our language, from the Elizabethan age to the present time.” “Dante, Shakespeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth. But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to find his superior.” This is indeed high praise; and whether we agree with the eulogium or not, the poet of whom such words can with any justice be used must ultimately obtain that recognition which is his due. We have proof, in the attention which is now paid on all hands to Wordsworth, that the recognition which was once doubtful is secured, and that Southey spoke but the truth when, in reference to some boast of Byron that he would “crush the ‘Excursion,’” the author of “Thalaba” burst out into the indignant words, “He crush the ‘Excursion!’ He might as well attempt to crush Mount Skiddaw!”

With the grateful admission that the more I read Wordsworth’s poems the deeper grows my admiration of them, I nevertheless question whether he will ever become a popular poet in the wide sense of that word—whether his poems will ever become “familiar as household words” to the mass—whether, while he is appreciated by the refined and cultured few, he will ever be anything but *caviare* to the less refined and less cultured many. If, indeed, it be true, as the

critic who saw neither "sweetness nor light" in the English people has told us with pleasant frankness, that "our upper class is materialized, our middle class vulgarized, and our lower class brutalized," how can a poet who appeals to principles which touch only what is highest and purest and most unworldly in our nature ever be generally popular? Wordsworth appeals to those who love nature and humankind, and have reverence for God. He wished either to be considered as a teacher or nothing; and he is therefore simply beyond the understanding of men who live for the world, and who care for nothing save so far as their vanity or selfishness is concerned.

But yet, again, as far as my observation goes, he is not popular with the young; those with whom in early life poetry is a passion, turn elsewhere to find the poetry which is congenial to their imperfect and undisciplined taste. What they enjoy is "the stirring incident by flood and field;" the romantic adventure; the thrilling story of love or war; the melodious flow of the rhyme; the sounding and sonorous verse. It is only when "the years that bring the philosophic mind" are upon us, and we seek for rest and repose in meditative thought, that we feel the charm of poetry that deals with delicate and subtle feelings, and of poems that are designed to be "in their degree efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier."

And, once more, there is, as it appears to me,

too little of human interest, as a rule, in the poetry of Wordsworth to allow of its ever becoming widely popular. Nature—however pure is the source of such inspiration—however we may love her glorious scenes and admire her ever-varying moods—however high the pleasure we may derive from her woods and waters, her mountains and lakes, has not the same power over the heart as the joys and sorrows, the laughter and the tears of our common humanity. Though in a certain and limited sense Wordsworth does deal with life, the life of the simple peasantry of the Westmoreland hills and dales, yet there is little in his poems of “the pity and the terror by which the passions are purified and refined;” nothing of the tragic emotion which thrills while it subdues, and holds the mind enchained and entranced; and his harp is wanting in some strings to whose touch the heart almost unconsciously vibrates and responds. His poetry is that of a man neither cold of nature nor weak in feeling—far otherwise, as we learn from his letters and his life, for he was capable of the strongest impulses and the profoundest emotion—but at the same time it is the poetry of one whose career was placid, and whose outward circumstances, with the exception of some domestic sorrows which fall to the lot of all, were successful and happy. Nothing of his “is written as if in star-fire and immortal tears,” and yet very beautiful was his conception of the message that poetry has to deliver, as we shall presently see

from a letter written to Lady Beaumont in 1807.

Wordsworth was one unlike his own Peter Bell ; he felt

“The witchery of the soft blue sky ;”

and so we are not surprised to learn, as his servant told a stranger, that his study was out of doors. He murmured out his verse in the open air, in sight of the hills and lakes which he loved, and not unseldom in the presence of intimate and sympathizing friends. Lady Richardson says :

“The Prelude was chiefly composed in a green mountain terrace on the Easdale side of Helm Crag, known by the name of Under Lancrigg, a place which he used to say he knew by heart. The ladies sat at their work on the hillside, while he walked to and fro on the smooth green mountain turf, humming out his verses to himself, and then repeating them to his sympathizing and ready scribes, to be noted down on the spot and transcribed at home.”

It is a pleasant scene that is here placed before the mind's eye—the poet, amid the stillness and glory of the hills, and in the presence of near and dear friends, walking thoughtfully up and down, and murmuring out some of those exquisite stanzas which have delighted us by their interpretations of Nature and the subtlety of their thought. But perhaps these sweet and tranquil surroundings were not favourable to any great intensity of passion, or to that divine tenderness of pathos which melts the heart and makes the eye overflow with tears.

The Lake Country must have had an added

charm to its wondrous beauty when it was the home of so many men known to fame—when Southey was at Keswick, and Professor Wilson at Elleray, and Wordsworth at Rydal, and Dr. Arnold and his family spent their vacations at Fox How. De Quincey, too, lived for many years in the district, and Quillinan, who married Wordsworth's daughter Dora, also resided there for a time, while Hartley Coleridge made his home at Nab Cottage, on the borders of Rydal Water. These and others were attracted to the district in order to be Wordsworth's neighbours. Here lived also many of the poet's intimate friends—amongst the number, Mrs. Fletcher and her daughter, Lady Richardson, and Mrs. Davy. All the men of note just mentioned had entered the silent land before the writer became acquainted with the Lake Country. Sir John and Lady Richardson were, however, still at Lancrigg; and Dr. and Mrs. Davy (he a younger brother of Sir Humphry) were living at Lesketh How. Of these, too, it must now be said, "the place that knew them knoweth them no more." Lady Richardson passed away, after a calm and happy old age,

"To where beyond these voices there is peace."

All these used to talk of Wordsworth with great reverence and affection. Mrs. Arnold, whom her loved Fox How knoweth no more, when she spoke of him, always called him "dear Mr. Wordsworth."

She was one of his chief friends, and a great admirer of his poems, into whose spirit and philosophy she was well fitted to enter. She used to tell with pride and affection how Wordsworth had suggested to Dr. Arnold the way in which the fine trees and beautiful shrubs that adorn the garden and grounds of Fox How should be planted, with an eye to the greatest picturesqueness and effect. And now *she* is gone, passed into the Father's home, to join those whom she loved, while hills and lakes remain, their beauty untouched, their charm as fresh as ever. And does not this make the very irony of life?—

“Our crown of sorrow this—its heaviest pain—
Loved ones must go, and only *things* remain.

“Here flows the Rotha that she loved so well ;
Here rise the hills, her friends for many a year ;
Here spreads the Intack on her own sweet Fell ;
Here are the scenes she ever held most dear.
Here, where her children rose to call her blest,
She passed in peace to her eternal rest.”

Was Wordsworth a Christian poet? There can be no doubt as to the answer; though we may not be able to say he was a religious poet—that is, not in the same sense that George Herbert, or Cowper, or Keble are religious poets. The poems of Wordsworth are decidedly Christian, but not in any sense theological, though his fine Sonnet to Laud might lead the reader to think him a High Churchman. His letters to Lady Beaumont—in which, while he explains to her the

reason why his poetry could never be popular with the world of rank and fashion, he tells her the object he had in writing his poems—prove that these are Christian in the truest sense of the word :

“ It is an awful truth (he says) that there neither is nor can be any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world, among those who either are or are striving to make themselves, people of *consideration* in society. This is a truth, and an awful one ; because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature and reverence for God. Upon this I shall insist elsewhere ; at present let me confine myself to my object, which is to make you, my dear friend, as easy-hearted as myself with respect to these poems. Trouble not yourself upon their present reception ; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny ?—to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous—this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves.”

Professor Wilson (“ Christopher North ”) in an interesting paper on Sacred Poetry says :

“ In none of Wordsworth’s poetry, previous to his ‘ Excursion,’ is there any allusion made, except of the most trivial and transient kind, to revealed religion. He certainly cannot be called a Christian poet. The hopes that lie beyond the grave, and the many holy and awful feelings in which on earth these hopes are enshrined and fed, are rarely, if ever, part of the character of any of the persons, male or female, old or young, brought before us in his beautiful pastorals. Yet all the most interesting and affecting ongoing of this life are exquisitely delineated ; and innumerable, of course, are the occasions on which, had the thoughts and feelings of revealed religion been in Wordsworth’s heart during the hours of inspiration—and he often has written like a man

inspired—they must have found expression in his strains ; and the personages, humble or high, that figure in his representations, would have been, in their joys or their sorrows, their temptations and their trials, Christians. But most assuredly this is not the case ; the religion of this great poet, in all his poetry published previous to his ‘Excursion,’ is but the religion of the woods.”

And even in the “Excursion,” Professor Wilson says, “while religion is brought forward in many elaborate dialogues between priest, pedlar, poet, and solitary, the religion is not Christianity.” “The interlocutors, eloquent as they all are, might, for anything that appears to the contrary, be deists.” It is true that Wordsworth, in many of his earlier poems, may be charged with Pantheism, for he speaks of Nature and her forces as if they were the only living soul of the universe. Have we not the very germ of Pantheism underlying those beautiful and familiar lines “On Re-visiting Tintern Abbey” ?—

“And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”

But we must remember that the poet, who, in the earlier part of his life, saw the impersonal God everywhere, and who spoke of the Living Being that created the universe as “a motion and a spirit that impels all thinking things,” did after-

wards write as a Theist, and spoke of a personal God whose greatness and goodness are to be seen in all His works. But if this were all—if he advanced no further, if there were nothing in his poems of the awful mystery of the cross—he could not with any justice be called a Christian poet. Is there any truth in the charge made by Mr. Ruskin against him in one of his articles in the *Nineteenth Century* on “Fiction, Fair and Foul,” that Wordsworth was “incurious to see in the hands the print of the nails”?

Let us look at some of his poems, and see if there be not in them the utterances of Christian faith and love and hope, and if he does not at times find his inspiration in the waters of that “river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.”

Can we do better than begin with the splendid ode on “Intimations of Immortality,” in which he chases away the sad thought that the present can never be as the past,

“The things which I have seen I now can see no more ;
But yet I know, where’er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth” :

by the sense of the joy that is around him—the birds singing a joyous song, the young lambs bounding, all the earth gay? Then after some beautiful stanzas about childhood he returns to the idea that “the glory and the freshness of the dream” are departed, but again dispels the mournfulness of the thought, not by the gladness of

Nature, which continueth the same however we change, but by the consciousness of what still remains, and by the hope that brightens the future.

Another passage shall now be given in which we see how the poet uses Nature as a handmaiden to lead the mind to God. All are familiar with the exquisite little poem, "The Primrose of the Rock," a poem that is fragrant with the spirit of true piety. I give the four last stanzas in full:

- "I sang—Let myriads of bright flowers,
Like thee, in field and grove
Revive unenvied ;—mightier far
Than tremblings that reprove
Our vernal tendencies to hope
In God's redeeming love ;
- "That love which changed—for wan disease,
For sorrow that had beat
O'er hopeless dust, for withered age—
Their moral element,
And turned the thistles of a curse
To types beneficent.
- "Sin-blighted though we are, we too,
The reasoning sons of men,
From one oblivious winter called
Shall rise, and breathe again ;
And in eternal summer lose
Our threescore years and ten.
- "To humbleness of heart descends
This prescience from on high,
The faith that elevates the just,
Before and when they die ;
And makes each separate soul a heaven,
A court for Deity."

Let me now take a verse or two from the poem to Lady Fleming, on seeing the foundation preparing for the erection of Rydal Chapel :

“ O Lady ! from a noble line
Of chieftains sprung, who stoutly bore
The spear, yet gave to works divine
A bounteous help in days of yore,
(As records mouldering in the Dell
Of Nightshade haply yet may tell ;)
Thee kindred aspirations moved
To build, within a vale beloved,
For Him upon whose high behests
All peace depends, all safety rests.

“ How fondly will the woods embrace
This daughter of thy pious care,
Lifting her front with modest grace
To make a fair recess more fair ;
And to exalt the passing hour ;
Or soothe it with a healing power
Drawn from the Sacrifice fulfilled
Before this rugged soil was tilled,
Or human habitation rose
To interrupt the deep repose !

“ Well may the villagers rejoice !
Nor heat, nor cold, nor weary ways,
Will be a hindrance to the voice
That would unite in prayer and praise ;
More duly shall wild wandering Youth
Receive the curb of sacred truth,
Shall tottering age, bent earthward, hear
The Promise with uplifted ear ;
And all shall welcome the new ray
Imparted to their sabbath-day.”

Wordsworth was not a hymn-writer, but could any hymn breathe a more evangelical spirit on the power of prayer than these two stanzas taken from “ The Force of Prayer ; or, The Founding of Bolton Abbey ”?—

“ And the Lady prayed in heaviness
That looked not for relief !
But slowly did her succour come,
And a patience to her grief.

“ Oh ! there is never a sorrow of heart
That shall lack a timely end,
If but to God we turn, and ask
Of Him to be our friend !

How beautiful is “ The Labourer’s Noonday Hymn,” with its touching prayer for pardon and grace!—

“ Up to the throne of God is borne
The voice of praise at early morn,
And He accepts the punctual hymn
Sung as the light of day grows dim.

“ Nor will He turn His ear aside
From holy offerings at noontide.
Then here reposing, let us raise
A song of gratitude and praise.

“ What though our burthen be not light,
We need not toil from morn to night :
The respite of the mid-day hour
Is in the thankful creature’s power.

“ Blest are the moments, doubly blest,
That, drawn from this one hour of rest,
Are with a ready heart bestowed
Upon the service of our God !

“ Why should we crave a hallowed spot ?
An altar is in each man’s cot,
A church in every grove that spreads
Its living roof above our heads.

“ Look up to heaven ! the industrious Sun
Already half his race hath run ;
He cannot halt nor go astray,
But our immortal spirits may.

“ Lord, since his rising in the east,
If we have faltered or transgressed,
Guide, from Thy love’s abundant source,
What yet remains of this day’s course :

“ Help with Thy grace, through life’s short day,
Our upward and our downward way ;
And glorify for us the west,
When we shall sink to final rest.’

That Wordsworth was not "incurious to see in the hands the prints of the nails" we learn from one of his Ecclesiastical Sonnets on "Temptations from Roman Refinements":

"Watch and be firm! for soul-subduing vice,
Heart-killing luxury, on your steps await.
Fair houses, baths, and banquets delicate,
And temples flashing, bright as polar ice,
Their radiance through the woods may yet suffice
To sap your hardy virtue, and abate
Your love of Him upon whose forehead sate
The crown of thorns; whose life-blood flowed, the price
Of your redemption. Shun the insidious arts
That Rome provides, less dreading from her frown
Than from her wily praise, her peaceful gown,
Language and letters; these, though fondly viewed
As humanizing graces, are but parts
And instruments of deadliest servitude!"

But indeed the Christian spirit and tone pervades Wordsworth's poetry; and though he does not put prominently forward the doctrines of our faith, or deal with religion dogmatically, yet does he, through hills and flowers and streams, sunshine and storm, lead the mind up to that Invisible God whose "tender mercies are over all His works." The birds—Nature's choristers, singing in their leafy choirs their hymns of grateful praise—suggest the thought—

"There lives who can provide
For all His creatures, and in Him,
Even like the radiant Seraphim,
These choristers confide."

So all sights and sounds—the roaring blast, the murmuring stream, the shadowy lane, the moving or motionless clouds, the wind-swept meadows,

the dreary winter, and the joyous spring—all lead the poet to reflection, to penitence, to praise.

To those who he fears may think him reserved on the subject of religion he offers this apology. In a letter written to a friend he explains his feelings in the words that follow :

“ For my own part I have been averse to frequent mention of the mysteries of Christian faith, not from a want of a due sense of their momentous nature, but the contrary. I felt it far too deeply to venture on handling them as familiarly as many scruple not to do. . . . Besides general reasons for diffidence in treating subjects of Holy Writ, I have some especial ones. I might err in points of faith as (he says) Milton had done ” (“ Life,” ii. pp. 364, 365).

In the beautiful district of England where the poet lived and died, his memory is fragrant still, and will be while the mountains that he loved remain in their beauty and grandeur, and the streams from which he drew his inspiration continue to flow. While poetry is loved and its influence continues ; so long as England honours nobility of thought and simplicity of life ; so long as her men and women are unworldly enough to reverence “ plain living and high thinking ”—so long will pilgrims find their way to Rydal Mount and Grasmere churchyard. At Rydal Mount Wordsworth spent the larger part of his life, and here he passed away, and at Grasmere is his lowly and simple grave. His end was peace. The last time he attended Divine service in the chapel at Rydal was Sunday, March 10. The next day he paid a visit to Mrs. Arnold at Fox

How, and on the following afternoon he caught a cold as he was calling at a cottage on the road to Grasmere. He sat down on a stone bench to watch the setting sun; the evening, though bright, was cold; a chill and an attack of pleurisy was the consequence, which kept him to his room, and finally confined him to his bed. On April 20 he received the Communion from his son, and then passed into a state of passive unconsciousness. At last Mrs. Wordsworth said to him, "William, you are going to Dora." He made no reply at the time, and the words seemed to have passed unheeded; indeed, it was not certain that they had been even heard. More than twenty-four hours afterwards one of his nieces came into his room, and was drawing aside the curtain of his chamber, and then, as if awakening from a quiet sleep, he said, "Is that Dora?"

On Tuesday, April 23, 1850, "as his favourite cuckoo-clock struck the hour of noon," his spirit passed away. His body was laid, according to his wish, under the turf in Grasmere churchyard, near the children whom he had lost, under the shade of the old sycamores, and close to the Rotha, which had often made such music in his ears.

How different—as was said in a letter of Mr. Hall Caine's, which appeared in the *Times* soon after Tennyson's interment in Westminster Abbey—the burial of the Laureate who succeeded him,

at whose stately funeral in Westminster Abbey there was impressive pomp and ceremonial, and the presence of nearly all that was great and intellectual in the land! Tennyson was followed to the grave by the sympathy of a Queen, and by thousands of mourners, as was right and befitting his greatness. Every journal had minute notice of his death and his interment. As regards Wordsworth, a few newspapers only had notices of his decease: there was no memoir, no eulogy, no critical estimate. He was buried on Saturday, April 27, in Grasmere churchyard. The poet's wife walked after the coffin, between her two sons, and with her son-in-law behind her, bowed and feeble, yet bearing herself calmly. Few or none were invited to join them. The little church was more than half filled with unbidden mourners of all ranks and ages, chiefly the rude statesmen of the dale. And this solemn and quiet funeral in the spot he had selected for himself in the quiet churchyard, under the shadow of the mountains which he loved with a passionate love, and near the beautiful river, was no doubt more in accordance with his simple life than would have been a stately funeral in a historical aisle of the noble Abbey.

The poet had not lived in vain. With all truth could he who succeeded to the post of Laureate after the poet's death say that he had received

“The laurel greener from the brow
Of him that uttered nothing base.”

There is every reason to believe that Wordsworth's own words concerning his poems will be fulfilled. "They will co-operate with the benign tendencies of human nature and society, and will in their degree be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier."

THE END.

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